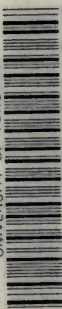


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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LIVES
OF
EMINENT UNITARIANS:

SELECTED BY

THE REV. W. TURNER, JES., M.A.

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY THE UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

AND SOLD BY

JOHN W. PARKER AND SON, 20, NEWGATE STREET

AND
JOHN W. PARKER, 121, NEWGATE STREET; AND

JOHN W. PARKER, J. PARKER, 121, NEWGATE STREET.

1840

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WITH A NOTICE OF

DISSENTING ACADEMIES.

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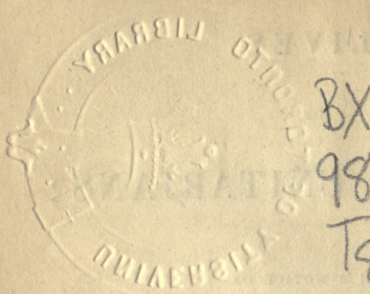
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G. SMALLFIELD AND SON, 69, NEWGATE STREET;

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PREFACE.

THE work now offered to the public was suggested by the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and is brought forward under their sanction. It appeared to them very desirable to place before the public in general, and more especially before the Unitarians of our own time, a series of memoirs of the most distinguished worthies who have adorned our churches, and whose learning and zealous labours have mainly contributed to promote the cause of rational Christianity. It was also conceived that the practical efficacy of Unitarian principles might be well illustrated, when displayed in its influence on the lives and character

of its most eminent professors. It seems important that we should know, not merely what our opinions are, but who and what our fathers were, in whose writings we find them most successfully maintained, and by whom were most ably asserted the genuine Protestant principles of free inquiry and private judgment, which, when followed out fearlessly and consistently, have led to these conclusions. That the Committee were right in thinking such an undertaking desirable will be readily admitted; how far they have adopted the best mode of carrying it into effect, is for the public to decide.

The Compiler of the following Memoirs has to crave from his readers the usual allowance to the biographer of literary men, whose retired habits and uniform mode of life commonly afford but few of the incidents best fitted to impart the kind of interest chiefly sought for in works of this class. The biography of a man, the greater part of whose life was spent in his study, must consist

in a great measure of an account of what he did in his study;—of those writings, namely, by which he has often exercised a powerful influence not only over his contemporaries but over successive generations, and earned for himself a name which deserves, and is likely, to be remembered by distant ages. It is hoped that those, for example, who take an interest in the researches which occupied the days and nights of such a man as *Lardner*, and who can duly estimate the value of the services rendered by him to the Christian world, will not think the narrative of his labours flat and insipid, because it exhibits no extraordinary events or varieties of situation.

In some instances it is unfortunately no longer possible to procure the necessary information of various particulars relative to the personal condition and history of eminent persons deservedly honoured for their valuable writings and other results of their labours; and hence the accounts which can now be given of several individuals of

distinguished merit are but meagre and imperfect. This deficiency will be particularly observable with respect to some of those who are remembered chiefly for their services in the conduct of Academical Institutions, but whose important labours in other ways prevented their appearing much before the public through the medium of the press.—To the other honoured names commemorated under this title, it was the writer's intention to add that of *Merivale*; but on learning that there was, at length, a prospect of the speedy appearance of an auto-biography of that excellent person, he abandoned the attempt to put together the few slight notices which are to be found scattered here and there in various publications.

In preparing the *Memoirs of Academical Tutors*, it will be perceived that very free use has been made of a valuable series of biographical papers inserted many years ago in the *Monthly Repository*, under the then well-known and familiar signature of V. F. Those who are aware to whom

they were indebted for the papers referred to, will join in the regret of the present writer, that their venerable author could not be prevailed on to contribute to this work in a more substantial form than by his occasional opinion and advice.

Published by the same Author,

The **DAY of the LORD**: a Sermon preached before the West Riding Association and Tract Society, May 12, 1830.

LECTURES on PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY,
2d Edition.

REMARKS on the commonly received Doctrine of
ATONEMENT and **SACRIFICE**, 2d Edition.

THOUGHTS on the Doctrine of **ORIGINAL SIN**.

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INTRODUCTORY SKETCH

OF THE

EARLY HISTORY OF UNITARIANISM IN ENGLAND.

ALTHOUGH it was not till a much later period that separate religious societies were formed in England, avowedly on Unitarian principles, yet the profession of these principles under one or other of their various forms and denominations is coeval with the Reformation; and this faith can boast of its full share of confessors and martyrs in those spirit-stirring but troubled and persecuting times. There is good reason to believe, that even the long night of darkness which had settled on the Christian world for so many centuries, accompanied and preceded as it was by gross corruptions of the pure simplicity of the Gospel, in no instance more generally prevalent than in the errors which almost totally obscured the doctrine of the absolute personal unity of the divine nature, was at no period altogether devoid of a few feeble glimmerings of that light which in more favourable times was destined afterwards to shine out with renewed lustre. At all events, the spirit of inquiry which gave rise to the reformation, and

was for a considerable time promoted and encouraged by its extensive spread, could not be limited to those questions which were chiefly under discussion between the great religious parties of the day. Accordingly, not a few assertors of Antitrinitarian opinions made their appearance in the very dawn of the Reformation.

The principal leaders, indeed, of the reforming party professed to retain, unchanged, the views of the Athanasian Trinity maintained by the Church of Rome; and it would even seem as if the very extent to which they had deviated from the standard of Popery in other directions only increased their solicitude to preserve themselves free from the imputation of heresy on this point. They were thus induced to display, in their treatment of those who had only followed out the genuine principles of Protestantism to a greater extent and with more consistency than themselves, a more than ordinary portion of that persecuting intolerant spirit which, in the language of a distinguished historian, is "the deadly original sin of the reformed churches; that which cools every honest man's zeal for their cause, in proportion as his reading becomes more extensive."*

The unhappy fate of Servetus is the foulest blot in the history of Calvin. But before his time there was no small number who openly professed the Unitarian doctrine, and among them some of high reputation for talents and learning.

Of the Italian confessors whose names impart a peculiar lustre to the early history of the reformation, not a few are well known to have re-

* Hallam. Const. History of England, i., 130.

jected the Trinity, along with the other corruptions of the Romish church; some of whom afterwards became the most distinguished lights of Unitarian communities in distant lands. Many also of those who received the denomination of Anabaptists openly or covertly denied the deity of Christ. Of these some adopted the Arian sentiment, others that of the proper humanity of Christ, afterwards maintained by Socinus. A few of the Baptists appear to have made their way into England even before the half-reformation of Henry VIII., and did not escape the fiery trial allotted to such as incurred the charge of heresy in those fierce and stormy times. In 1548, John Ashton is recorded to have preached Unitarianism, and, under the terrors of the stake, to have signed a recantation when summoned before Archbishop Cranmer. In 1550, however, the Unitarian doctrine is represented as spreading with alarming rapidity, so that it was deemed necessary to resort to harsher measures. Joan Bocher, who appears, from the obscure and imperfect accounts which we have of her, derived only from the hostile persecuting party, to have been a woman of quality and consideration, is believed to have agreed in sentiment with the Baptists, in their general persuasion of Christ being not a God, but a creature. She appears to have been a zealous reformer, and particularly active in promoting the diffusion of the Scriptures; which, having access to the court, she was at pains to disperse in secret among the ladies of distinction who resorted there. For Arianism (as it is called), and some not very intelligible nicety about the incarnation, this excellent person was persecuted to death by Cran-

mer and Latimer. When the tender-hearted young king for some time refused to sign the warrant for her execution, Cranmer undertook to argue the matter with him; and when, at last, he yielded, the king told him, with tears in his eyes, that if he did wrong, since it was in submission to his authority, he must answer to God for it.

This noble-minded martyr to the truth, who, whether right or wrong in her opinions, displayed a spirit of which the world was not worthy, in times of unexampled and formidable difficulty, such as we in these comparatively peaceful days happily cannot easily appreciate, is unfairly described by Burnet as a poor wrong-headed woman, that was burnt for some extravagant notions concerning Christ, but was looked on as a person fitter for Bedlam than the stake.

Soon afterwards George Van Pare, a Dutchman, being convited of saying that God the Father was the only God, and that Christ was not very God, was committed to the flames in Smithfield. He was a man of strict and virtuous life, and very devout: he suffered with great constancy of mind, kissing the stake and faggots that were to burn him.

"These things," as is candidly acknowledged by Bishop Burnet, "cast a great blemish on the Reformation. It was said they only condemned cruelty when it was exercised on themselves, but were ready to practise it when they had the power. The Papists made great use of this afterwards in Queen Mary's time; and what Cranmer and Ridley then suffered was thought a just retaliation on them from a wise Providence, that dispenses all things justly to all." These unhappy excesses

of intolerant bigotry, so inconsistent and peculiarly unreasonable in men who had freely exercised that liberty which they denied to others, testified fatally against Cranmer, when, after so short an interval, he himself fell into the same trouble; for they left him without excuse or reply, when it was alleged that, by the confession and practice of the reformers themselves, it appeared that men, even of harmless and exemplary lives, might be put to death for their opinions. But such was the delusion of the times, and the influence of a heated religious zeal, aggravated by controversy and virulent contention, operating upon ruder manners and a fiercer and harsher state of society than that which happily prevails at present.

It is not easy to assign to any of the contending parties of this distracted age a deeper stain of the persecuting spirit than the rest. If the Catholics displayed it in a greater number and variety of instances, it must be remembered that they had greater power and more frequent opportunities, and that it had not in them the same obvious and glaring inconsistency with professed principles, and with the right of individual judgment which they asserted and exercised, which marked its exhibition by the leading reformers. Even the flames of persecution directed against themselves did not check the vehemence of their animosity against those who had gone further in the same road, and pursued their own avowed principles to their natural, and, as we think, necessary consequences.

Of this a very remarkable and curious instance is recorded in the case of Archdeacon Philpot,

who signalized himself by indecent and insulting behaviour towards some of his fellow-prisoners under the Marian persecution, who denied the doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. The rudeness and violence of this conduct in such circumstances displeased many, even in those times, and he accordingly attempted to vindicate himself in a little tract, entitled "An Apology of John Philpot, written for spitting upon an Arian; with an Invective against Arians, the very natural Children of Antichrist, with an Admonition to all that be faithful in Christ to beware of them, and of other late-sprung Heresies, as of the worst Enemies of the Gospel."*

A very remarkable contrast to the bitter violence of this railing controversialist is seen in the just and rational sentiments of a distinguished Unitarian, Acontius, who passed several years in England under the protection of Queen Elizabeth. "That one thing," says he, "I never could look upon but as the most unreasonable of all, that a man who is supposed to have taught any thing false or impious should be compelled, on a promise of impunity, to make recantation of it. To what end this, I pray? What advantage can be proposed by it, if the heretic, for the sake of avoiding the punishment, retract his opinion against his conscience? It may, perhaps, be pretended that those who are in the like error, and lie concealed, may thus be wrought upon sincerely to renounce it, and all be brought by degrees to follow the example. But they must have taken up

* For the whole of this very singular piece, with a running commentary, containing many very judicious remarks on the general question, see Lindsey's *Historical View*, pp. 96—151.

their sentiments on very slight grounds who can so easily relinquish them. Is there not much more reason to suspect, that such renunciation of their sentiments may be made merely to avoid suffering? And will not this have the appearance of something very shocking and oppressive, as if the magistrate aimed not only to kill the body, but to lay a snare for the destruction of the soul too? Are we, then, so destitute of armour wherewith to encounter erroneous opinions, that we must have recourse to lies and feigned abjuration for our defence against them? It may be said that this is by no means what is intended, to procure a retraction any how of such opinions, but that the heretic may not only in words, but from the heart, abandon them. This is, indeed, finely spoken, if it can be accomplished. But what mean those fierce threatenings on the one hand, and flattering promises on the other? These may, indeed, contribute to overcome and influence the will and inclinations; but the great business is with the understanding. This cannot be affected by menaces or the most engaging allurements. They cannot make that which before appeared to be true to appear false, how much soever a man may desire it. But if this cannot be done, and a heretic, however earnestly he may wish it, cannot quit his heresy but by conviction of stronger argument against it, why should you importune and solicit the miserable man to lie, and thereby more offend both God and man?"*

Acontius was a native of Trent in Italy; he

* *Acontii Stratagemata Satanæ*; as quoted in Lindsey's *Historical View*, p. 75.

was originally bred up to the legal profession, and afterwards spent most of his life in courts, engaged for the most part in laborious occupations. Having embraced the Protestant faith, he quitted his country and settled in England, where, under the protection of Queen Elizabeth, he obtained some employment connected with fortifications, for which his skill in mathematics eminently fitted him. The work from which the above extract is taken shews him to have been not only a man of an enlarged and liberal spirit, far beyond the prevailing temper of the times in which he lived, but a firm believer in the unity of God.

It is not in the unseemly spirit of vain boasting that we claim for the Unitarians in general, of that and of every other period, a greater freedom from this unchristian temper than is to be found in any other sect. It is true that the practical influence of their principles may be expected to lead to this result, because they are not called upon, like many others, to regard the right path (meaning *their own* path) to be essential to salvation. But, unhappily, we so rarely find men's practice in all respects conformable to their avowed principles, that this exemption is, perhaps, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the good fortune of the Unitarians, in having been very little exposed to the temptation. Long may they continue to enjoy this fortunate exemption! May the time never come when a synod or consistory of professed Unitarians shall be in such a manner connected with or dependent on the state, as to be invested with power which they may be tempted to abuse, in seeking to lord it over the consciences of men!—"With good and religious reason (says

Milton, in his admirable discourse ‘Of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration’) all Protestant churches, with one consent, maintain these two points as the main principles of true religion,—that the rule of true religion is the word of God only, and that their faith ought not to be an implicit faith; that is, to believe, though, as the church believes, without or against express authority of scripture. And if all Protestants, as universally as they hold these two principles, so attentively and religiously would observe them, they would avoid and cut off many debates and contentions, schisms, and persecutions, which too oft have been among them, and more firmly unite against the common adversary. For hence it directly follows, that no true Protestant can persecute or not tolerate his fellow Protestant, though dissenting from him in some opinions; but he must flatly deny and renounce these two, his own main principles, whereon true religion is founded; while he compels his brother from that which he believes as the manifest word of God to an implicit faith (which he himself condemns) to the endangering of his brother’s soul, whether by rash belief or outward conformity, for whatever is not of faith is sin.”

In 1575, twenty-seven foreign Baptists were apprehended, four of whom recanted their opinions under the terror of the stake. Shortly afterwards two Dutchmen were actually burnt in Smithfield, notwithstanding an eloquent expostulation addressed by Fox the martyrologist to Queen Elizabeth. To say the truth, it hardly deserved to succeed, for all he aims at is to substitute some milder form of death, thus virtually conceding the

principle of persecution for opinions in all its extent. In 1579, W. Hamont, a *plough-wright*, of Hetherset, near Norwich, underwent the same frightful sentence. The heretical opinions laid to his charge, as reported by Mr. Locke,* are evidently such a distortion and exaggeration of Unitarianism as might be expected from violent and prejudiced judges under such circumstances. In 1583, John Lewis was burnt at Norwich for denying the deity of Christ. Some years after, two other persons suffered at the same place for *blasphemy*, by which term there is every reason to believe we are to understand some form of Unitarianism.

In the following reign of James I. two persons suffered in the same cause. In 1611, Bartholomew Legatt, called an Arian, said to have been well versed in the scriptures, and a man of unblamable conversation, being apprehended, King James himself conferred with him, in order to convince him of his error. This not succeeding, he was committed to Newgate, and, after being examined before Bishop King at his consistory at St. Paul's, was declared to be a contumacious and obstinate heretic; and as such, he was burnt at Smithfield, on the 18th of March, amidst a vast concourse of people. A pardon was offered him, when he was at the stake, if he would recant, but he refused it. The next month Edward Wightman, of Burton-upon-Trent, was convicted of heresy as an Arian† and Anabaptist, and eight

* See Mr. Locke's Letters to Limborch, Oct. 7, 1699.

† So he is called; but the heretical tenets ascribed to him as reported by Mr. Locke, as far as they are intelligible or credible, shew him to have been rather a believer in the simple humanity of Christ.

pestilent heresies besides, some of which are contradictory to each other, before Dr. Neile, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. He was burnt at Lichfield, April 11

“About this time (says Fuller) a Spanish Arian being condemned to die, was, notwithstanding, suffered to linger on his life in Newgate, where he ended the same. Indeed, such burning of heretics much startled common people, pitying all in pain, and prone to asperse justice itself with cruelty, because of the novelty and hideousness of the punishment. Wherefore King James *politically* preferred that heretics hereafter, though condemned, should silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison, rather than to grace them and amuse others with the solemnity of a public execution, which in popular judgments usurped the honour of a persecution.”*

We say nothing of the spirit of this passage, or of the motive ascribed in it to the pattern of *politic* wisdom who adopted this new mode of dealing with heretics;—it is however certain, that, from whatever cause, Legatt and Wightman were the last on whom the atrocious and horrible sentence of burning was actually carried into execution in England, though the writ “*de hæretico comburendo*” continued to disgrace the English law till the year 1676.

Thus it appears that, throughout the whole of the first century after the Reformation, all that can now be collected of the history in this country of what we consider as the pure and simple doctrine of the gospel consists of a series of acts

* See Fuller's Church History of Britain; as quoted in Lindsey's Apology, p. 55.

of gross violence ; outrages alike on the natural rights of man, and on that liberty wherein Christ hath made him free. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that these cruel excesses of persecuting bigotry, endured, as by the testimony of unfriendly historians they seem to have been, with a constancy and fortitude worthy of martyrs, who not only were convinced of the truth, but experienced the value and excellence of their principles, were not without the effect which scenes like these commonly produce on the public mind. Compassion for unmerited suffering passes into admiration when it is met with the spirit of a martyr, and naturally leads to the suspicion that the principles which excited and maintained such a spirit were not unworthy of it. We find accordingly that the records of religious intolerance continue to present occasional instances of individuals who were called to account before the authorities of the day for the alleged crime of having professed Antitrinitarian sentiments. Of these, some were visited with various forms and degrees of punishment, while others gave way before the storm, and read a recantation, the sincerity of which may well be doubted. There are other indications that the denial of the deity of Christ was a growing opinion, though it might not as yet be openly expressed and avowed, there not being at this time a single society of worshipping Christians in England, assembling professedly on Unitarian principles. Of these indications, perhaps, the most unequivocal is seen in the alarm manifested on the subject by the patrons of the prevailing opinions, and particularly in the iniquitous ordinance against heresy

and blasphemy passed by the parliament, then consisting chiefly of Presbyterians, in 1647. Men do not in general enact new and severe laws against evils which they do not at least believe to be urgent, and to require a searching and powerful remedy.

But, previous to this time, it has been surmised that a strong tendency to Unitarian views may be traced in some of the most eminent persons of that age. This suspicion applies to Hales, to Falkland, and more particularly to Chillingworth; and it is so far probable, inasmuch as they were all of them men avowedly devoted to bold, free, and unbiassed inquiry into religious subjects, and in their writings have denounced in strong terms the system almost universal at that time, and too prevalent in all ages, of human creeds, articles, and confessions, especially where the reception of them is enforced by the rude sanctions of pains and penalties of human enactment. When it is considered that Unitarians have one and all adopted the liberal course on this subject, while the doctrine of the Trinity, not being expressible in language derived from scripture, is of necessity stated in propositions of human devising, so that its adherents are naturally also the framers and advocates of articles and creeds, we cannot much wonder that this circumstance alone should be thought to afford a strong *primâ facie* evidence of the tendency of these great men to the profession of tenets which have been so intimately associated with their leading and distinctive principle.

The Socinianism of Falkland rests on the testimony of Aubrey, who wrote his life, in which he styles him the first Socinian in England;

having been converted by the perusal of the first copy of the "Fratres Poloni" which was brought into this country. Hales's celebrated tract on Schism is chiefly derived from Socinus; and the works of Chillingworth frequently betray a familiarity with the Polish writers. His well-known letter to Dr. Sheldon, in which he argues the question of subscription in a most clear and unanswerable manner, on principles which admit of no refutation or dispute, assigns the Athanasian Creed, among other insurmountable obstacles to his subscribing the Articles of the English church, and partaking by that means of the emoluments and preferments which his friends were able and willing to bestow upon him. There is good reason to believe that his difficulties went farther than this; and though it is unfortunately too true, that, notwithstanding his manly and honourable protest, he was in no long time prevailed on to subscribe, and was appointed to sundry preferments accordingly, it is impossible to recognize in this conduct anything but another instance of that practical weakness and inconsistency which is often found in the acutest, and, in the main, most upright minds. Certainly his writings abound with declarations of the most enlarged and liberal character, leading of necessity in their practical application to a spirit of free inquiry and mutual toleration for which that age was by no means prepared.

It is thought by some, that Milton was even at this period what it is now no longer a matter of doubt that he at length became; but it does not appear that there is any direct evidence for this, nor any other presumption of it than what is derived from the natural tendency of the manly and

liberal spirit which everywhere pervades his noble political tracts. On the other hand, it is contradicted by several passages in which an incidental reference occurs to the doctrine of the Trinity, and in one instance (in the discourse on the Reformation in England, near the close of the second book) by a direct and formal address to the three persons of the Godhead. In the latter part of his life, we might infer with considerable confidence, from various intimations in the works which he himself gave to the world, what is now clearly ascertained by the recent discovery of his treatise on the Christian doctrine. In the discourse already quoted, "Of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration," when contending that those who hold divers opinions on many points of doctrine are not on that account heretics, if they sincerely and honestly appeal to scripture in a diligent and prayerful endeavour to understand it, in which endeavour, nevertheless, the most diligent and conscientious are liable to err, he instances among others, "The Arians and Socinians are charged to believe against the Trinity; they affirm to believe the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the scripture and the apostolic creed: as for the terms of trinity, tri-unity, co-essentiality, tri-personality, and the like, they reject them as scholastic notions not to be found in scripture; which by a general Protestant maxim is plain and perspicuous abundantly to explain its own meaning in the properest words belonging to so high a matter, and so necessary to be known; a mystery indeed in their scholastic subtleties, but in scripture a plain doctrine." The general strain of the Para-

dise Lost is most nearly accordant with what is called the High Arian doctrine; and in one of the finest and most striking passages of the *Paradise Regained*, the early dawn and gradual development of our Lord's character is beautifully depicted in a poetical enlargement of what the gospel teaches, that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man."

"O what a multitude of thoughts at once
Awakened in me swarm, while I consider
What from within I feel myself, and hear
What from without comes often to my ears,
Ill sorting with my present state compared!
When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good, myself I thought
Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
All righteous things; therefore above my years
The law of God I read, and found it sweet."*

Mr. Lindsey, in his "*History of the Unitarian Doctrine*," with a conscientious regard for strict accuracy of statement which does him honour, retracts the inference he had previously deduced from this passage as to the Unitarianism of Milton, an inference, says he, in which I was certainly mistaken. He does not assign the reasons which induced him to doubt the correctness of his former conclusions; but we now know that they were perfectly well founded.

Though the matter has of late been occasionally disputed, there seems to be no good reason to doubt that the Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers, in this early period of their his-

* *Paradise Regained*, book i., 196—207.

tory, did not make an open profession of the doctrine of the Trinity; at all events, they did not make the profession of this or any other tenet not to be found in the scripture an essential requisite to admission into their community. Their most eminent and distinguished writer, W. Penn, in his "Sandy Foundation Shaken," has given as clear a view of the pure Unitarian doctrine, and as able an examination of many of the texts commonly adduced in support of the opposite system, as is any where to be found. The monthly meeting at Philadelphia, in their correspondence with George Keith (an active heresiarch, who had been endeavouring to sow divisions among them, and who, having afterwards seceded, was ordained a clergyman of the established church), declare their determination to keep to the plainness and simplicity of scripture language in all discourses about matters of faith, divinity, and doctrine; not believing subjects above the investigation of human reason and knowledge to be necessary to salvation, further than they are clearly revealed in the scripture. The declaration of their faith on these points presented to both Houses of Parliament, as preserved in Sewell's History of the Quakers, is strictly and properly Unitarian.* Their descendants in this country have for the most part deserted the faith and practice of their forefathers in this respect; and have not only adopted in their public declarations the tenets and language of

* See the Monthly Repository, viii. 647. For a collection of prayers delivered by twelve preachers of note in this society towards the close of the 17th century, expressed for the most part in terms which no Unitarian would hesitate to use, see the same publication, vol. ix. 167.

modern orthodoxy, but in various instances have not hesitated formally to expel from their body those who adhered to the sentiments and professions of its original founders. In America it would appear that an influence of an opposite kind has been in operation, the liberal principles of the founders having carried a great majority into an open avowal of Unitarianism, while a Trinitarian minority has seceded.

If there could before have been any rational doubt entertained as to the religious opinions of Mr. Locke, the extracts from his *Adversaria Theologica*, inserted in the life of this great man by the late Lord King, must have completely removed them. We find there a statement of the arguments relied on by the opposite parties, expressed in terms, and drawn up in a form, which could have been used only by one who had already pretty decidedly made up his mind on the question in debate. On this subject, however, no one can doubt who reads with attention and impartiality his well-known treatise entitled "The Reasonableness of Christianity," which is "just such a treatise as a Unitarian would, and as no Trinitarian could by possibility, have written," or who observes the obvious tendency of many of the criticisms in his valuable and excellent Commentary on several of St. Paul's Epistles. It has even been said that he was the author of one of the papers published at this period, and collected under the title of Socinian tracts; but of this there is no sufficient evidence.

Another layman, of still greater eminence and celebrity, Sir Isaac Newton, who likewise devoted a large portion of his time and thoughts

to theological studies, especially in the latter part of his life, is also with good reason included in the catalogue of Unitarian worthies. The evidence, however, is less direct in his case than in that of Mr. Locke, and may, perhaps, be thought by some to be less decisive; a circumstance which may be accounted for partly by Newton's constitutional reserve and timidity,—his great aversion to personal controversy, in which an open avowal of such opinions would almost inevitably have involved him,—and, perhaps, a not unreasonable apprehension of unpleasant consequences from the same parties who in his own time expelled his successor Whiston from the mathematical chair at Cambridge. But the manner in which he has stated the evidence for the true reading, in his very valuable treatise entitled “An historical Account of two remarkable Corruptions in the New Testament, 1 John v. 7, and 1 Tim. iii. 16,” two of the main pillars of the received doctrine of the Trinity, on which, more than on any others, its less learned supporters are accustomed chiefly to rely; and this unaccompanied with any *caveat*, which a trinitarian critic would almost infallibly have added under such circumstances, but in surrendering a part of the evidence for orthodoxy he should be suspected of giving up the doctrine itself, would alone be sufficient ground for a strong suspicion that he had abandoned both the one and the other. We have, in addition to this, the direct testimony of Mr. Hopton Haynes, one of his most intimate associates during the latter part of his life,—himself a very diligent student of scripture, and a zealous Unitarian,—that Newton was not only an anti-trinitarian, but much lamented that

his friend Dr. Clarke had stopped at Arianism, which opinion he feared had been, and still would be, if maintained by learned men, a great obstruction to the progress of Christianity.

Besides these distinguished men, whose names are an honour to any cause, there were, towards the close of the 17th century, not a few learned and able advocates of the pure simplicity of the Gospel; whose writings remain, though their names have been withheld from the knowledge of posterity. The authors of the Socinian tracts, already referred to, have left us a vindication of the genuine evangelical doctrine, which in many particulars may fairly be said to have exhausted the subject. To these publications we shall take another opportunity of adverting; at present it may be enough to observe, that the very circumstance of the extensive circulation of so many works of this description is in itself a strong ground for believing, that they did not fail to meet with numerous and willing readers. The impression they produced on the public mind was such as to alarm the patrons of received opinions; who were roused to come forward as usual, not with the spiritual armour of sound argument and fair discussion, but with the carnal weapons of pains and penalties. The statute enacted in King William's reign, against *blasphemy*, as it was called, provided that all persons denying that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were separately and distinctly God, or maintaining that there were more Gods than one, should be incapable of holding any office or place of trust, and for the second offence be disabled from bringing any action, or from acting as guardian, executor, legatee, or purchaser

of lands, and shall suffer three years' imprisonment without bail. Happily this statute seems to have been found from the first to be a step beyond what the improving spirit of the times would bear. Though there were many, both obscure and distinguished, who notoriously came within its danger, it does not appear to have been put in force against those whose only crime was speaking or writing against the doctrine of the Trinity, and it remained nearly a dead letter, till long after it had been actually swept from the statute book, when it occurred to the promoters of a recent attack on Presbyterian endowments to make it the basis of an argument not less inconclusive than it was illiberal and unjust.

The writers of these anonymous tracts approached most nearly to the system of Socinus; but in the succeeding age, the learning and high reputation of Clarke and Whiston in the Church of England, and of Emlyn and Peirce among the Dissenters, led the greater part of those who quitted the standard of orthodoxy to embrace the Arian hypothesis. This accordingly appears to have been the system generally adopted by most of the eminent lights of the rational dissenters who are commemorated in this volume. In the larger, and perhaps the juster, sense of the word, however, we include them all under the denomination of Unitarians, inasmuch as they agreed in the great principle of acknowledging one, and but one, object of supreme worship,—namely, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may add, that, on whatever minor points they may have differed (as in fact it is scarcely possible that those who truly inquire and think for them-

selves should be really of one mind on all disputed questions), on one grand and leading principle they were all cordially agreed ;—in asserting for themselves, and conceding to others, the inalienable right of private judgment, and in acknowledging the duty incumbent upon all of exercising this right (or rather of performing this duty) without bias or prejudice, examining the scriptures for themselves, and openly and candidly professing the doctrines which they honestly believed to be inculcated by the word of God, without regard to any creeds or systems of human devising, whether imposed by the civil power, or recommended by the authority of synods and councils.

This is the principle on which we endeavour to act ; and we cannot doubt that it will lead all who adopt it throughout, and consistently, to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. May that time speedily arrive, when the eyes of men shall thus be opened to prove all things ; when they shall discern that God is one, and his name one, acknowledging the Father to be the only true God, and Jesus his messenger to be the Christ !

JOHN BIDDLE

May without impropriety be called the father of English Unitarianism; for though, as we have already observed, there is good reason to believe that Arianism spread so rapidly in the reign of Edward VI. as to excite the alarm of the rulers of the church, and that several refugees from the horrors of the Marian persecution returned home with a considerable tincture of the Anti-trinitarian views which had already been professed by some of the most distinguished reformers on the continent, and though more than one Unitarian martyr may be cited from the annals of those gloomy times, yet, as far as is distinctly known, Biddle was the first Englishman who came forward openly to vindicate Unitarian principles either from the press or from the pulpit. He also appears to have been the first to gather even two or three to offer their requests to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the form which may be presumed to be most acceptable to him who laid the injunction on his disciples, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing; but whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." It was but a little flock, and was speedily dispersed when the shepherd was taken away; but the leaven still remained to work more extensively in happier and more liberal, if not more enlightened, times. On these accounts, we justly place his name at the head of that catalogue of worthies in whose characters and history, we, as

Unitarians, may be expected to take a peculiar interest, as the ornaments of our faith, and as mainly instrumental in recommending it to the Christian world, not only by their able appeals to scripture and reason in its behalf, but by illustrating its efficacy and practical value in the example they have set before us of the virtues which ought to adorn the Christian character.

Mr. Biddle was born at Wotton-under-Edge, in Gloucestershire, in the year 1615. Though he had no pretensions to the rank or eminence derived from a long line of distinguished ancestry, he inherited from his parents that truest respectability which arises from a faithful discharge of the duties of life, and which procured them, along with other more valuable advantages, an intercourse with persons of superior station. He received his classical education at the grammar school of his native place, where he seems to have distinguished himself by early proficiency, and to have attracted notice as a youth of high promise. It is pleasing to learn that there was also observable in him, at this early period, that singular piety of mind and disregard of mere worldly and temporal considerations which characterized him through life; for he now not only devoted himself to liberal pursuits and studies, but engaged with great diligence and assiduity in the assistance of his recently widowed mother.

In 1632 he was admitted of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, where he continued his studies with increasing success and reputation; and there is reason to believe that he already gave indications of that disposition to exercise an independence of judgment and freedom of inquiry which were ever after a leading feature of his character, and the

mainspring at once of his eminence and of his misfortunes. After occupying with high reputation for a few years the post of college tutor, he was offered the mastership of the grammar school in which he had received the rudiments of his education, but declined in favour of a competent person, who at his recommendation was appointed. At length he was induced to accept the appointment of master of the free school of St. Mary of Crypt, in the city of Gloucester. In this honourable station, on which he entered in the year 1641, he met with the success which was anticipated from the high reputation he had previously acquired; and notwithstanding the dangers attendant on the impending political struggle, there can be little doubt that, if he could have refrained from an earnest and ardent inquiry after religious truth, or (having met with it, as he believed, in a different track from that pointed out by the ruling sects of the day); if he could have reconciled his conscience to an outward conformity, he might have remained unmolested in a condition of great credit, usefulness, and prosperity. But though, doubtless, well aware of the troubles which awaited him in that violent and intolerant age, his high sense of duty did not permit him to chain himself down to an implicit adoption of authorized creeds, nor to bury in the silence of his own breast what he conceived to be important, though unpopular and obnoxious, truth.

In addressing his mind to this inquiry, he did not (as is the practice with too many) first examine what the rulers and pharisees believe,—what the fathers, the councils, or the church, have determined,—and then seek to adjust the scripture

to a conformity with the comments and traditions of fallible men,—but applied in the first instance to the fountain head, seeking for his religious faith nowhere but in the oracles of God. Nor had he, when he finally embraced Anti-trinitarian sentiments, any familiarity or even acquaintance with the writers on that side, though he afterwards studied the works of the Polish Socinians. There are few who have the impartiality or independence of mind to adhere rigidly to this rule; and yet there can be no question that, if the object be to ascertain not what this or that sect or church believes, but to learn as nearly as possible the true meaning of the sacred scriptures, the most likely way is first to acquire a competent knowledge of the languages in which they are written, and then read and judge for ourselves. If commentaries or any other extraneous sources of information are sought for, they should be such as are chiefly critical; or make it their business to collect the various facts relating to the history of ancient nations, the habits, manners, and general condition of the people, and other circumstances which may serve to illustrate obscure allusions and difficult passages which a mere acquaintance with the language will not alone enable us to explain.

It is not to be expected,—such is the diversity of connexions, previous opinions, and peculiar associations, which variously influence the mind of man,—that this method, even when conscientiously pursued, shall always lead to the same results; and therefore we ought neither to be surprised nor offended to find honest and candid inquirers differing in their conclusions;—least of all, however satisfied of the truth of our own, are

we entitled to take it for granted that such inquirers will infallibly adopt them. In Mr. Biddle's case the result was a conviction that the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity has no foundation in scripture. As he was well persuaded that it could not be otherwise than important, that what God had condescended to reveal should be rightly understood by those to whom it was addressed, his newly-acquired views were communicated without reserve, not only to those who might be engaged in similar researches, and might therefore be of service either to confirm or to correct them, but to some whose narrow-minded notions were disturbed or offended by these *novelties*, as they considered them, and whose intolerant bigotry could not endure that others should seek the way to salvation on a different track from themselves.

Biddle was presently summoned before the magistrates to answer to a charge of heresy. In the statements of his opinions which he offered at this period, there appears a degree of indistinctness and apparent vacillation, ascribable, perhaps, to an unwillingness to encounter the hostility of persecuting bigots, of which, in that intolerant age—when what are now the most obvious, and, indeed, generally acknowledged principles of religious liberty, were very imperfectly understood and even expressly disclaimed by all the contending parties who were then striving for the mastery—one of the lightest consequences would probably be the forfeiture of a lucrative, honourable, and important office, on which not merely his station in life but his subsistence appeared to depend. If it were so, there are few who would be entitled, and of these very few would be inclined, to visit with

strong censure the infirmity of human nature, which had not, at first, the fortitude to look consequences like these steadily in the face. On this, his first appearance before the civil magistrate to answer for his religious faith, he appears to have availed himself, as many of those who are called his followers afterwards did with less excuse, of the acknowledged ambiguity of the scholastic term *person*, to screen himself from the penalties of avowed nonconformity by expressing heterodox opinions in orthodox language.

On the other hand, when it is considered that he was at this time extricating himself by his own unassisted researches from the prejudices of his early education, and gradually acquiring fresh light by his own examination of scripture, it is by no means improbable that his views may as yet have partaken of the indistinctness of his language, and that he had not yet arrived at that clear perception of the truth which he afterwards attained, and boldly professed in the midst of still more formidable hazards. Certain it is, that he persevered for more than a year after this time in that course of free and diligent inquiry, the result of which had already brought him into so much peril. Nor did his experience of former dangers inspire him now with so much worldly prudence as to lead him to withhold his more matured and decided opinions from his friends, to whom he now freely opened his mind on the doctrine of the Trinity.

At this time he drew up and communicated to them a piece, which he intended afterwards to publish, entitled, "Twelve Arguments drawn out of Scripture, wherein the commonly received Opi-

nion touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly and fully refuted." These arguments are reduced to the form of regular syllogisms, each proposition of which is largely illustrated by the author, both from reason and scripture. Thus, "He that is distinguished from God, is not God. The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God;" *ergo*, "He that speaketh not of himself, is not God. The Holy Spirit speaketh not of himself;" *ergo*, "He that is sent by another is not God. The Holy Spirit is sent by another;" *ergo*, &c. It will be perceived that they are all founded on the assumed personality of the Holy Spirit, which Mr. Biddle continued to acknowledge to the last; and hence, though sufficiently well adapted to serve as *argumenta ad hominem*, when addressed to an opponent who proceeds on this assumption, they will appear less satisfactory to Unitarians of the present day, by whom this notion is almost universally rejected, except in a few cases where the term Holy Spirit is clearly synonymous with God the Father.

By indiscretion or treachery, a copy of this paper fell into the hands of the parliamentary committee, at that time sitting at Gloucester, by whom the author was committed (Dec. 2, 1645) to the common gaol, till the parliament, which was then (as the writer of a short account of his life in the old Socinian tracts expresses it) inflamed with *Genevan* zeal against such heretics, should take cognizance of the matter. This measure, the professed object of which was merely to secure his person, a purpose which might have been accomplished by much less rigorous means, had this additional hardship, that he was labouring at

the time under a dangerous fever. From this confinement, however, a friend at Gloucester had influence enough to procure his enlargement, by giving security for his appearance when it should please the parliament to send for him. During the interval, which lasted about six months, he was visited by the celebrated Archbishop Usher, who happened to pass through Gloucester, and, hearing of his case, endeavoured to convince him of his error, but without success. Indeed, he was not very likely to succeed, if it be true that the argument he chiefly dwelt on was, that, if Mr. Biddle was right, the church for so many centuries had been wrong, and guilty of idolatry. His opponent would, doubtless, reply, "Let the church bear its own burden: it is my business to inquire what says the scripture."

Shortly afterwards he was summoned to appear at Westminster, and examined before a Committee of the House of Commons, appointed for that purpose. He now freely confessed that he did not acknowledge the commonly received notion of the Deity of the Holy Spirit, as he was accused; but was ready to hear what could be opposed to him, and, if he could not make out his opinion to be true, honestly to own his error. This, however, was not the style in which any of the religious parties of those times, at least when they felt themselves the strongest, were disposed to deal with those who differed from them. For sixteen months from the time of his first commitment he was detained in a chargeable attendance, without any sentence of condemnation having been passed upon him. At length, being wearied out with tedious and expensive delays, he addressed him-

self to Sir H. Vane, who was a member of the committee, beseeching him to endeavour either to procure his discharge, or, at all events, to bring the matter to a crisis, by making a report to the House. He then proceeds to deliver his opinion concerning the Holy Spirit, whom he considers to have been "the chief of all ministering spirits peculiarly sent out from heaven to minister in their behalf that shall inherit salvation." This opinion he endeavours to confirm by various arguments and references to scripture, most of which appear to us in these days somewhat fanciful, though not ill-adapted to the taste of the times and the party to whom they were addressed. He concludes his appeal in the following impressive and pathetic strain: "For my own particular, after a long, impartial inquiry of the truth in this controversy, and after much and earnest calling upon God to give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, I find myself obliged, both by the principles of reason and scripture, to embrace the opinion I now hold forth, and, as much as in me lyeth, to endeavour that the honour of Almighty God may not be transferred to another, not only to the offence of God himself, but also of his Holy Spirit, who cannot but be grieved to have that ignorantly ascribed to himself which is proper to God that sends him, and which he nowhere challenges to himself in scripture. What shall befall me in the pursuance of this work, I refer to the disposal of Almighty God, whose glory is dearer to me, not only than liberty, but than my life. It will be your part, honoured Sir, into whose hands God hath put such an opportunity, to examine the business impartially, and to be a helper

of the truth, considering that his controversy is of the greatest importance in the world, and that the divine truth suffers not herself to be despised scot-free.

“Neither let the meanness of my outward appearance deter you from stirring, since it is the part of a wise man, as in all things so especially in matters of religion, not to regard so much who it is that speaketh, as what it is that is spoken; remembering how our Saviour in the Gospel saith, that God is wont to hide his secrets from the wise and prudent, and reveal them unto children; in which number I willingly reckon myself, being conscious of my own personal weakness, but well assured of the evidence and strength of the scripture to bear me out in this cause.”

This appeal was so far effectual, that Sir H. Vane endeavoured to befriend him by bringing his case before the House; but the only consequence was, that he was forthwith committed to the custody of one of the officers of the House, under which restraint, exercised with more or less rigour, he continued for five years. The question in debate was referred to the assembly of divines then sitting at Westminster, before a committee of whom he was frequently summoned, and submitted to them his “Twelve Arguments.” As might be expected, however, from a discussion conducted under such circumstances, no satisfactory result was obtained. Indeed, it appears that he was met by appeals to the passions rather than to the judgment,—by bitter railing, and threats of a further appeal to the strong arm of the civil power; a species of weapon, as he justly observes, which might enable the weakest disput-

ant easily to subvert the strongest controversy. Hence he was at length induced to publish this piece, with a preface bespeaking the reader's serious attention to the arguments laid before him, as to a matter which affected the Divine glory and his own salvation; and requesting him, "at any hand, to forbear condemning his opinion as erroneous, till he was able to bring pertinent and solid answers to all his arguments."

The appearance of this tract produced, as may be supposed, a great sensation, and excited a vehement outcry. By order of the House of Commons, it was speedily called in, and ordered to be burnt by the common hangman; a mode of dealing with religious, or indeed with any, controversy, which, while it is suggested by bad and violent passions and still further exasperates them, has an obvious tendency to defeat its own purpose; since it draws the attention of the bystanders and of the public to the subject, and the work itself which is treated with such contumely,—still further excites the general curiosity, and creates a natural suspicion in every candid and thoughtful mind, that those who resort to such violent proceedings seek only to stigmatize and suppress that which they feel themselves unable to refute. Thanks to the operation of the printing-press, it is in vain now to expect that a production which has once made its way before the public can ever be finally put down by such means as these.

Mr. Biddle, however, was not so intimidated by the formidable exercise of human power displayed against him as to be deterred from directing his thoughts to the further promotion of what he conceived to be the noblest and most

worthy object on which they could be engaged, namely, a just understanding of the truth of God as revealed in his holy word. The fruit of these studies he soon afterwards published to the world in two tracts, which appeared in 1648; the first entitled "A Confession of Faith touching the Holy Trinity, according to the Scriptures;" the second, "The Testimonies of Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Novatianus, Theophilus, and Origen, who lived in the two first centuries after Christ was born, or thereabouts, as also of Arnobius, Lactantius, Eusebius, Hilary, and Brightman, concerning the One God, and the Persons of the Holy Trinity." These pieces were doubtless suppressed at the time of their first publication, as far as was practicable; but they were reprinted in 1691, and are included in the first volume of the collection commonly called "The Old Socinian Tracts." In the preface to his "Confession of Faith," the author enlarges with much force of argument on the doctrinal absurdities and practical mischiefs which arise from the belief of three persons in one God; shewing that it introduceth, in fact, three Gods, and thus subverteth the unity of God so frequently inculcated in Scripture. Moreover, it hinders us from praying to God through his son Jesus Christ, as the Gospel directeth us to do; it prohibiteth us to love and honour God as we ought, for the highest love and honour is due to him who is the most high God; but the highest can be given to one person only; and the Son and Spirit being obviously derivative and dependent beings, can be only secondary objects of honour and love. The Confession itself is comprised in six articles, in the first of which he declares his belief in one most high God, the creator

of heaven and earth, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son he considers as the *second* cause of all things pertaining to our salvation, and *consequently* as the intermediate object of our faith and worship, to whom also he ascribes the title of God, but in an inferior and subordinate sense. The last article relates to the Holy Spirit, and is as follows :—" I believe that there is one principal minister of God and Christ, peculiarly sent from heaven to sanctify the church, who by eminence and intimacy with God is singled out of the number of the other heavenly ministers or angels, and comprised in the Holy Trinity, being the third person thereof ; and that this minister of God and Christ is the Holy Spirit." The subjoined scriptural illustrations of these articles contain much acute and ingenious criticism on the texts which have been chiefly insisted on, on both sides of this controversy ; but his concessions of the title God, as applied to Christ, and of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, involve his argument in difficulties and obscurities, of which an expert opponent would not fail to take great advantage. The " Testimonies," &c., among other decisive proofs that the opinions of these early fathers were very remote indeed from what has passed for orthodoxy in later times, contain several of the remarkable passages which have since been rendered so familiar by Dr. Priestley's " History of the Corruptions of Christianity," and the controversy to which it gave rise.

No one acquainted with the temper of those times will imagine that such publications as these could come abroad without exciting the most vehement indignation against their author, and call-

ing down upon his head a still heavier storm than any which he had hitherto experienced. It was manifested, as usual, by most arbitrary exertions of that power which our Lord utterly disclaimed as a supporter for his church. On this occasion it was that the Assembly of Divines, chiefly Presbyterians, solicited from the Parliament the infamous ordinance against heresy and blasphemy. By this, among other flagrant outrages, it was enacted that any one who should, by preaching, printing, or writing, controvert the Deity of the Son or of the Holy Spirit, or the equality of Christ with the Father, or the distinction of two natures, or the sinless perfection of his humanity, should be declared a *felon*. It doomed them, if convicted on confession or on the oaths of two witnesses, before two justices, to imprisonment, without bail or mainprize, until the next gaol delivery, when the witnesses were bound to give evidence, and the party were to be indicted for feloniously publishing and maintaining such error. It then enacted, that in case the indictment should be found, and the party on trial should not abjure the said error, and maintenance and defence of the same, he or they should suffer the pains of DEATH, as in case of felony, without benefit of clergy.

When such an instrument as this was placed in the hands of his enemies, it might seem that Biddle's fate was sealed; and it would most probably have been so, if he and such as he had been the only parties endangered by it. But it happily contained other clauses, denouncing severe penalties, though not proceeding to the same extremity, against many who, in these days of civil strife, were too powerful and formidable to be

thus dealt with. Among others, not a few in the army, both officers and soldiers, held opinions which were branded as heretical by this iniquitous statute; and hence, when the violently intolerant party whose councils had hitherto been predominant were shortly afterwards displaced by military force, their persecuting law was not enforced, and for several years lay nearly unregarded. After the death of the king, chiefly through the representations of Cromwell, a milder policy was adopted in respect of religious dissentients, by which Mr. Biddle in some measure benefited. He was still in custody under his original commitment by the House of Commons; but at this time he had somewhat more liberty allowed him by his keeper, and was even permitted, on security being given for his appearance, to go into Staffordshire, where he lived for some time in the house of a gentleman, who not only entertained him with kindness, but made him his chaplain, and procured him an appointment to preach at a neighbouring church. At his death he left him a legacy, which proved a seasonable supply to him, as he had by this time exhausted whatever funds he had accumulated at Gloucester in the expenses which his long confinement and other persecutions had occasioned. The name of this generous friend has not been preserved, nor does it appear for what length of time Mr. Biddle's respite continued. But it was probably not long; for we find that notice of his situation having been given to Bradshaw, the President of the Council of State, he was, by his direction, recalled, and placed in more strict and rigorous confinement.

At length, in 1651, the Parliament having passed a general act of oblivion, this virtuous suf-

ferer for conscience' sake was restored to full liberty, which he improved without delay, with a few friends whom his writings and the harsh usage he had received had procured for him in London. These he formed into a small religious society, who met in private every Lord's day for worship and the study of the scriptures. Their association was formed on the principle of the strict and absolute unity of the Divine nature, acknowledging the Father only as the proper object of Christian worship; the Saviour Christ as a man approved of God and sent by him to save mankind from their sins, and recognised to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead; and the Holy Ghost, conformably to the views maintained in Mr. Biddle's "Twelve Arguments," to be a distinct intelligent spirit, of high dignity and excellence, but not God, nor in any sense the object of worship. It is singular that, though we have good reason to believe that in this small community good seed was sown which did not altogether perish, and in particular that among its members were some of the authors of that remarkable collection of tracts already mentioned, which appeared in this country towards the close of the seventeenth century, and strongly attracted the attention of the religious world at that period to the Unitarian controversy, very few of the names of Mr. Biddle's immediate followers and disciples have been recorded.

For about three years Mr. Biddle and his friends appear to have enjoyed the liberty of meeting for worship and mutual improvement in humble obscurity, but unmolested. During this period his little congregation received a visit from Dr. Gunning, afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity at

Cambridge, and Bishop of Ely. He came attended by some learned friends, not, however, as presently appeared, for the purpose of witnessing, still less of joining in their worship, but to interrupt, oppose, and contradict. If Mr. Biddle had returned the compliment, the constable would have been sent for to take him into custody as a disturber of the public peace, and, perhaps, not undeservedly. But Gunning seems to have delighted in this kind of skirmishes, and was in the habit, as his biographer tells us, of looking out all sorts of sectaries, to dispute with them openly in their own congregations. On this occasion he immediately commenced a formal disputation, first, on the Deity of the Holy Spirit; and afterwards on the supreme Deity of Christ. Mr. Biddle was taken at a disadvantage, and by surprise, and, therefore, if he had been worsted in a contest undertaken upon such unfair and unequal terms, it ought not to have been considered, nor would it by any impartial person, as a symptom of the weakness of his cause. The discussion was conducted, as was customary in those days, according to the technical forms of the scholastic method of disputation, in which it is probable that the habits of our author's former life, as a student and tutor at the University, had rendered him sufficiently well skilled. At all events, he acquitted himself with such ability in this unlooked-for contest, as to defeat the design of his antagonist, and even to call forth a complimentary acknowledgment of his talent and skill as a disputant. Thus it happened that this attack, which was intended to destroy his credit with and influence over his adherents, had the contrary effect,

and served only to shew more clearly how deeply he had studied the question, and made himself master of the argument before he ventured on the bold and decisive step of avowing an unpopular doctrine, which rendered him obnoxious at once to the multitude and the civil power, and placed him in collision with the most learned men and the subtlest disputants of his time.

It may, however, be made a question how far such public contests, whether conducted in the formal method of syllogistic warfare, or in the more popular style of personal conference occasionally practised in our own times, are well fitted to promote either the cause of truth or the love of it. The point determined by the dispute, if any, is not which party is in the right, but which is the ablest disputant, the acutest reasoner, or most eloquent speaker; and the object will commonly be, not to search candidly for the truth, and to embrace it wherever it is to be found, but to prove the opponent to be in the wrong, to lay hold of and magnify those flaws and oversights in argument of which he who has the better cause may often be guilty. A habit of disputing, not for truth but for victory, is in this manner too apt to be generated. It may be added, that success in contests of this kind commonly depends not so much on general talent, or even on a correct knowledge of the points in question, as on other qualifications of a merely personal nature;—on a facility in public speaking, or on a peculiar readiness and self-possession, with an acuteness in discerning and exposing the weak parts of an opponent's case, which may or may not be connected with the profession of the truth, or with a disposition

to seek after and embrace it. We have no further record of the particulars of this public contest, or of its result; but there is no reason to think that it was any exception to the general rule in such cases, where the opposite parties commonly leave the scene of contention with their views unchanged, except that the line of separation is made more distinct, more broad and impassable than before, and each disputant more thoroughly fixed and settled in his original opinion.

About this time Mr. Biddle published several small pieces, chiefly translations from the writings of the Polish Unitarians; among the rest, "A brief Inquiry, touching a better Way than is commonly made use of to refute Papists, and to reduce Protestants to a certainty and unity in Religion." The immediate object of the writer (Joachim Stegman) is to point out the advantage which the advocates of Popery derive from certain opinions maintained by some Protestants, particularly on the condition of the soul in a supposed intermediate state. His remarks on this subject are judicious and forcible; but the work derives its principal interest from the sound views it exhibits of the proper method of seeking for religious truth, namely, to discard all human authority, and to stick to the scripture only, as explained and understood by right reason, without having any regard to tradition, or the authority of fathers, councils, &c. On this subject the following remarks of the translator are well deserving of attention.

Speaking of those who would be displeased with the work, because reason is therein much cried up, he says, "My desire therefore is, that

such persons would but consider what the holy scripture itself saith on this behalf;—how Paul (Rom. xii. 1) calleth the service which Christians are to exhibit unto God a *rational* or reasonable service. And Peter (1 Ep. iii. 15) saith, ‘Be ready always to make an apology unto every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.’ Which passage clearly intimateth, that as there is no incongruity for others to require a reason of our hope in Christ, so we Christians are, above all other professors whatsoever, obliged to be very *rational*;—for to make an apology or defence in the behalf of so abstruse and sublime a doctrine as ours is, requireth a more than ordinary improvement of reason.

“This being so, it may seem strange why so great a number even of Protestant ministers should make reason a common theme to disclaim against, giving to it (without warrant of scripture) the name of *corrupt* reason and *carnal* reason, and other the like eulogies. But the truth is, they themselves hold many absurd, *unreasonable* opinions; and so know right well, that if men once begin to make use of their *reason*, and bring the doctrines that are commonly taught to the touchstone of the scripture, explained and managed in a rational way, their tenets and reputation with the people will soon be laid in the dust. Let such ministers henceforward either leave off clamouring against reason, or no more open their mouths against Papists, and their opinion about transubstantiation; for whosoever shall sift the controversy between Papists and Protestants concerning it, shall find, that the principal, if not

only, ground why we reject it, is because it is repugnant to *reason*. But if transubstantiation is to be disclaimed because contrary to reason, why shall not all other unreasonable doctrines upon the same ground be exploded, especially seeing there is scarce any one of them that can plead so plausible a colour of scripture for itself as that can?"

Another piece translated by Mr. Biddle was Przypcovius's Life of F. Socinus, with the preliminary discourse prefixed by that writer to the works of Socinus. "His views in this publication," says Dr. Toulmin, "appear to have been truly laudable and liberal; namely, to do justice to a character which had been much aspersed, and to hold up to contemplation a great example, at the same time that he enters a caveat against an implicit deference to the judgment of his hero."

At this period our author also published two remarkable tracts in the catechetical form, explanatory of his peculiar views of Christian doctrine; one entitled "A Scripture Catechism," the other "A Brief Scripture Catechism for Children;" in which the apparently unexceptionable plan is pursued, of leaving the scripture to speak for itself, by constructing the questions in such a form that the answers may be given in the unaltered words of holy writ. He describes his Scripture Catechism as "composed for their sakes that would fain be mere Christians, and not of this or that sect; inasmuch as all the sects of Christians, by what name soever distinguished, have more or less departed from the simplicity and truth of the scripture." I have called this an *apparently* unexceptionable method; but it may,

perhaps, be doubted, whether it is really entitled to all the praise of impartiality and fairness which seems at first sight to belong to it. It is granted that we have good reason to consider it as no small recommendation of our religious opinions, that they admit of being expressed in the genuine words of scripture, without requiring the introduction of new and strange terms and phrases unknown to the sacred writers. But it may be alleged, that the difficulty which is sometimes felt in dispensing with such phrases, is to a certain degree incidental, arising from the change of language, and from the circumstance that the books of the New Testament were, for the most part, written with an immediate view to local and temporary purposes; so that it is hardly to be expected that they should contain a regular statement of doctrines which admits of being construed with minute verbal accuracy, like the clauses of an act of parliament, or the formal propositions of a systematic treatise. It must be remembered, too, that all Protestant sects profess at least to found their peculiar doctrines upon scripture; and there can be little doubt that, by a dexterous adaptation of the questions to the phraseology of detached passages selected from different places and separated from their connexion, catechisms might be constructed upon this plan which should appear to give the sanction of holy writ to the most discordant opinions. The method, if it be adopted at all, requires to be pursued with caution, from its tendency to withdraw the attention from the general *scope* and *tenor* of the sacred writings, and direct it upon particular words and phrases; in not a few instances, upon the words,

not of the author himself, but of his uninspired translator, who may not always have fairly represented the meaning of the original; being, perhaps, unconsciously biassed so as to give a turn to the passage favourable to his own previously formed opinions. It may be added, that this mode of citing texts, unless carefully guarded, is in danger of encouraging the baneful practice of adducing passages of scripture as though they were a collection of detached aphorisms, and not portions of a continued discourse, to be interpreted by reference to the context and the obvious intention and purpose of the writer. The remark of some one, that at this rate we might prove from scripture the proposition, "*there is no God,*" is scarcely an exaggeration of the extent to which this abuse has sometimes been carried, or of the mischievous absurdities which have in this manner sought to derive the shadow of support from the highest authority.

The appearance of these tracts was enough to alarm the bigoted advocates of prevailing doctrines, who presently proceeded to adopt the usual arbitrary and oppressive mode of dealing with an opponent stigmatized with the odious and unpopular name of heretic. A series of propositions was selected and condemned by a vote of the House of Commons, and the book itself ordered, as usual, to be burnt by the common hangman. Mr. Biddle was summoned to the bar of the House, and interrogated whether he was the author of the obnoxious treatise. Instead of committing himself by an avowal, he answered by asking, in his turn, whether it seemed reasonable that one brought before a judgment-seat

as a criminal should accuse himself? This prudent reserve, however, was of no avail to protect him when the judges had already condemned him unheard. He was forthwith committed close prisoner to the Gate-house; debarred the use of pen, ink, and paper, and denied the access of any visitant. At the same time his book encountered two opponents, who attacked it with more suitable and appropriate weapons. Mr. N. Estwick, some time fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, published an examination and confutation of Mr. Biddle's "Confession of Faith," touching the Holy Trinity; and the celebrated Dr. Owen, then in the zenith of his fame and the brightest ornament of the University of Oxford under the Commonwealth, at the request of the Council of State, drew up and published his "*Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, or the Mystery of the Gospel vindicated, and Socinianism examined in the Consideration and Confutation of a Catechism, called a Scripture Catechism* by J. Biddle."

The oppressive treatment to which our intrepid confessor was thus subjected seems to have had no effect on his subsequent conduct. Undismayed by the fear of man, he continued to assert the rights of conscience; and when set at liberty from his rigorous confinement, instead of withdrawing into tranquil obscurity, contented to enjoy his opinions in silence, he resumed his former labours for the promotion of what appeared to him to be the truth as it is in Jesus. It was not long, therefore, before he was again brought under the cognizance of the civil power. There seems little reason to doubt that Mr. Biddle's personal exertions and publications, aided as they doubtless

were, to a very considerable extent by the notoriety and public sympathy which he derived from these repeated persecutions, had excited a spirit of inquiry, and even a disposition to embrace his doctrines in numbers sufficient to rouse the alarm both of the sincere bigot, who honestly believed that the profession of the right faith (meaning *his own* faith) was essential to salvation, and of others, who, with more unworthy motives, were anxious to maintain their own personal influence, and the political predominance of the religious party to which they belonged. To the former class probably must be referred a Mr. Griffin, the minister of a Baptist congregation in the city, many of whose hearers had begun to shew a leaning to Unitarian opinions; he was induced, in consequence, to challenge Mr. Biddle to a public disputation on the subject in his own meeting-house. With considerable hesitation and reluctance, probably arising from an unwillingness to *court* the hostile notice of the temporal power, though he never allowed such considerations to deter him from the path of indispensable and acknowledged duty, Mr. Biddle at length complied, and met his antagonist, whom he found surrounded by a numerous auditory, including some of his own most bitter and vehement adversaries. Griffin began by asking, if any man there did deny that Christ was God most high? on which Mr. Biddle replied, with sincerity and firmness, "I do deny it." The disputation then proceeded by Griffin endeavouring at large to establish the affirmative, which he is said to have done in such a manner as to shew himself no fit opponent for Mr. Biddle, who it was agreed

should take his turn to bring forward the opposite arguments on a future day, to which the debate was adjourned. But in the mean time, a power of a different kind took up the matter. Information had been laid by some of the parties present at the first day's debate of Mr. Biddle's open avowal of his sentiments; the consequence of which was, that he was speedily committed, and at the next session brought to trial for his life. He was arraigned on the iniquitous ordinance before-mentioned against heresy and blasphemy; which after having for some years lain almost dormant, was revived on this occasion as the instrument of oppression against the same individual whose earlier exertions in behalf of free inquiry after religious truth had in the first instance suggested it. The mode of procedure was in many respects worthy of the unchristian spirit of the law (if it deserves that name) on which it was founded. When he prayed that counsel might be allowed him to plead the illegality of the indictment, it was denied him by the judges, and the sentence of a mute threatened. Upon this he gave into court his exceptions engrossed on parchment, and with much struggling had counsel allowed him; but his trial was deferred till the next day.

His life now appeared to be in imminent hazard, for he was in the hands of those who had no want of disposition to exert to its full extent the power with which this persecuting ordinance invested them. Here, however, the policy of the Protector Cromwell happily led him to interfere on his behalf, and prevent matters from being carried to this extremity. The temper of the

times considered, Cromwell had imbibed more just ideas of religious liberty; and in many instances shewed himself not indisposed to act upon them, where political interests and the establishment of his own precarious ascendancy did not appear to demand a different course. It is true he frequently adopted very harsh and arbitrary measures, both against the Episcopalians and the Catholics; but he seems to have been influenced herein, not by religious bigotry, but by the persuasion, doubtless not ill-founded, that these parties were almost unanimously hostile to his government. On the present occasion, it was contrary to his policy to strengthen the hands of the Presbyterian party, who, in that age, were the most active abettors of rigorous proceedings against those whom they deemed heretics. All that were for liberty, especially many congregations of Baptists, petitioned for Biddle's discharge, and earnestly protested against the revival of this tyrannical ordinance, by which their own liberties would be endangered, and the leading articles of the "instrument," on which the Protector's government was founded, infringed. Of these articles one of the most remarkable was as follows:— "Such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ (though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth) shall not be restrained from, but protected in the profession of their faith and exercise of their religion." And again, "all statutes, ordinances, &c., to the contrary of the aforesaid liberty, shall be esteemed null and void."

Notwithstanding this, it would not have been prudent in Cromwell to set Mr. Biddle completely

at liberty; by which step not only the Presbyterians, but the greater part of those of all denominations who were earnestly attached to what were called orthodox views in religion, would have been deeply offended. He, therefore, detained him in prison, and, after some time, wearied out with the solicitations of the contending parties, sent him into banishment in the Scilly Islands, October 5, 1655.

In this seclusion he was, it is true, debarred from most of his customary occupations, and particularly from that to which his life had been mainly devoted, namely, that of asserting and promoting the diffusion of what he regarded as the pure truth of the Gospel; but he was at the same time withdrawn from the pursuit of his deadly enemies, and, for nearly three years, employed his solitary leisure without interruption in biblical studies. Here, his biographer informs us,* “he enjoyed much divine comfort from the heavenly contemplations which his retirement gave him opportunity for;—here he had sweet communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and attained a clearer understanding of the divine oracles in many particulars. Here, while he was more abundantly confirmed in the doctrines of his confession of faith, &c., yet he seems, notwithstanding, to have become more doubtful about some other points which he had formerly held, as appears from his Essay to the explaining of the Revelation, which he wrote after his return thence; which shews that he still retained a free and unprejudiced mind.” During this period he was partly provided for by an

* Short Account of the Life of Biddle, p. 8, Socinian Tracts, vol. i.

allowance of a hundred crowns a-year, granted him by the Protector; and there is reason to believe that, in the little flock of attached adherents whom he had collected in London, there were some both able and willing to minister to his necessities.

In the year 1658, Cromwell suffered a writ of *habeas corpus* to be granted by the Upper Bench Court, as it was then called, by virtue of which Mr. Biddle was at length set at liberty and restored to his friends; among whom he speedily resumed his long interrupted exercises and pursuits, undismayed by the dangers he had encountered and the evils he had suffered, and deeming not even his life dear unto him, if by any means he might promote the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he had sent. In a short time, however, fresh troubles arose. Five months after his return from banishment the Protector died, and his son Richard called a parliament, which being mainly returned by his old enemies, the Presbyterians, were not unlikely to resort to hostile proceedings against him. He, therefore, took the precaution of retiring into the country during this session; but, on the dissolution of that parliament, he resumed his former station, till the restoration of Charles II., when, as is well known, the Episcopal church being immediately re-established, its adherents shortly repaid, with interest, to dissenters of all descriptions, the sufferings they had themselves endured. All public meetings for worship elsewhere than at the established churches were interdicted, and punished as seditious. By these violent and arbitrary measures, Mr. Biddle and his friends suffered in common

with those from whom they had formerly endured so much. For some time he endeavoured to protect himself from the impending storm by abstaining from public assemblies, and holding only private meetings. But even so, he was not safe; for, on the 1st of June, 1662, when he and some of his friends were met for divine worship at his own lodgings, they were seized and carried before Sir Richard Brown, a justice of peace, who committed them all to prison, without admitting them to bail. The recorder, having more regard for legal forms, released them on their finding security to answer to the charge to be brought against them at the next sessions. There seems, however, little doubt that these outrageous proceedings were not only prompted by any thing rather than a regard for the public peace, but directed by a 'vigour beyond the law.' The Act of Uniformity was indeed passed at this time, but did not come into force till some months afterwards; and, in fact, when the trial came on, the court, not being able to find any statute whereon to found an indictment, they were referred to the following sessions. They were then proceeded against at common law; a mode of procedure which sometimes appears nearly equivalent to leaving every thing to be settled at the discretion of the presiding judge. The result was, that every one of the hearers was fined in twenty pounds, and Mr. Biddle in one hundred pounds, and to be imprisoned till the fine was paid. From inability to pay this fine he, therefore, continued in prison. But, in five weeks afterwards, through the noisomeness of the place and the close air, (very offensive to him, whose only recreation and exercise for many years had been to walk

daily in the open air,) he contracted a disease, which put an end to his life on the 22d of September, 1662. He was then in the strength of his age, the forty-seventh year of his life.

That John Biddle was prepared to meet death in whatever form he might present himself, with calmness and composure, no one who attentively considers the events of his life can for a moment doubt. His whole life had been one continued preparation for its close; and, though devoted to the service of God, and of the best interests of mankind, but little of it had been of such a character as to inspire him with any very ardent wish for its long continuance. With the apostle he might be ready to spend and be spent in the cause of Christian truth, which is that of human happiness and improvement; but with him also he could not but inwardly pray to be released from this toilsome painful service, to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Through much tribulation it was allotted to him, in a dark and troubled age, to perform his appointed work; but he did perform it with an undaunted spirit, swayed neither by the praise nor the fear of man, inspired only by a regard for the honour of God, and what he conceived to be the truth as it is in Jesus, with an earnest endeavour so to impress it on the understandings of men, that it might exercise a practical influence over their hearts and lives.

He was far from being a voluminous writer; and though his name is intimately associated with the history, in our country, of that doctrine which he laboured and suffered so much to diffuse, he was by no means particularly eager to engage in

the various controversies which his obnoxious opinions from time to time excited. In fact, he was at all times much more disposed to lay stress on a life suitable to the Christian profession than on the utmost correctness of doctrinal opinion, and was unwilling to discourse of his distinguishing tenets with those who appeared not to be religious according to their knowledge. "Neither could he bear those that dissembled in profession for worldly interests. He was a strict observer himself, and a severe exacter in others, of reverence in speaking of God and Christ and holy things; so that he would by no means hear their names or any sentence of holy scripture used vainly or lightly; much less any foolish talking or scurrility. He would often tell his friends, that no religion would benefit a bad man; and call upon them to resolve with themselves as well to profess and practise the truth that is according to godliness, as to study to find it out, and that against all terrors or allurements to the contrary; being assured that nothing displeasing to Almighty God could be in anywise profitable to them."*

It is to be regretted that the little band of followers whom Mr. Biddle had collected, though many of them had imbibed his religious opinions, do not seem to have been equally imbued with his firmness and spirit. There is no appearance of their having continued after this time to hold meetings for worship, or maintaining their connexion in any way as a religious society upon Unitarian principles. We mention this as a subject of regret, not of censure, with which we, who

* Short Account, &c., p. 10.

live in more peaceful tranquil days, have no right to visit those who yielded to trials which we ourselves might not have been able to bear. The only one of Mr. Biddle's disciples who has attained any distinction is Mr. *Thomas Firmin*, then a young man, who lived, however, to become a very eminent London merchant, and the associate and intimate friend of Archbishop Tillotson, Fowler, Bishop of Gloucester, and others of the most distinguished men of his time. In his private intercourse with these friends, he made no secret of his Unitarian opinions; and it is even understood that many tracts in the curious and valuable collection already mentioned, and known by the name of the old Socinian Tracts, were written under his direction, and published at his expense. But he was all his life an outward conformist to the Church of England; and, in fact, is much more worthy of remembrance as an active, benevolent, though not always very judicious philanthropist, than as a consistent and conscientious Unitarian.

These remarks are believed to apply also in a considerable measure to the writers of the "Socinian Tracts." These appeared, for the most part anonymously, at intervals during the last ten years of the seventeenth century; and there can be no doubt that they had a powerful effect in drawing the attention of the religious world at that period to the Trinitarian controversy. Many of them display extensive learning, and are written with no ordinary talent, spirit, and controversial skill. In fact, in various instances these writers have left little of consequence to be added by their successors in more recent times. But they did

not conceive that their principles laid them under any obligation to come out of the church. On the contrary, they even pretended to prove the *agreement* of Unitarians with the Catholic church; and availed themselves with great ingenuity of the controversy at that time prevailing between Sherlock and South, and their respective adherents, to shew that, while the former were no better than Tritheists, the latter, whom they represented as constituting a great majority, differed in nothing essential from the Unitarians; so that they themselves were to all intents and purposes good sound orthodox churchmen. In all this, it must be confessed that logical dexterity is much more conspicuous than honesty or consistency. If Mr. Biddle, to whom they sometimes profess to look up as their master, had learnt in their school, or had been disposed to act upon their principles, he might never have gone to the Scilly Islands; nor would he now have been remembered as an illustrious and venerable confessor, who "on evil days though fallen and evil tongues," did not hesitate to contend manfully for the truth, though called upon to sacrifice station, property, liberty, and, finally, even life itself, in its cause.

THOMAS EMLYN

WAS born at Stamford, in Lincolnshire, in the year 1663. His parents, though they stately attended the worship of the established church, were friendly to the principles of the Nonconformists; and accordingly, even at that period, when such a destination held out no flattering prospect, and might lead to bonds and imprisonment, they did not hesitate to devote their son to the Christian ministry in that connexion. For this purpose, after the usual preparatory course of grammar learning, he was sent, in 1678, to an academical institution conducted by a Mr. Shuttleworth, at Sulby, in Northamptonshire. For a short time he was admitted at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and was afterwards transferred to the academy of Mr. Doolittle, in the neighbourhood of London. Here he had greater advantages in the access to books, &c.; but there is reason to think that he was more indebted to his own personal exertions and private studies than to the instructions he received. His tutors appear to have been worthy and conscientious, but narrow-minded men, of no superior talent or compass of thought. He seems, however, to have speedily acquired reputation as a young man of acquirement and promise; for, in 1683, when only twenty years of age, he became chaplain to the Countess

of Donegal, who then resided in London, and the following year went over with her family to Belfast in Ireland, where she was shortly afterwards married to Sir W. Franklin. Here he continued for some years in his capacity of chaplain, with a liberal salary, and was treated with great respect and distinction. Sir W. Franklin, who had a large property in the west of England, offered to present him to a considerable living in that part of the country ; but he declined it, not in consequence of any scruples on the doctrine of the Trinity, respecting which no difficulties had as yet arisen in his mind, but from a dissatisfaction with the prescribed terms of ministerial conformity. That he was not, however, at this time a rigid Nonconformist, appears from his not only attending regularly the ordinary services of the church, but frequently officiating for the neighbouring clergymen, having a license for so doing from the bishop of the diocese, *facultatis exercendæ gratiâ*. The disturbances which took place in the north of Ireland in consequence of the landing of James II. in that country, occasioned the breaking up of the Countess of Donegal's establishment, and Emlyn retired to England; previously to which, however, he received an overture through Mr. Boyse, one of the ministers of the Presbyterian congregation in Wood-street, Dublin, to become his colleague as successor to Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Daniel Williams, who had been driven from his charge by the violent and tyrannical proceedings of the popish administration of the time. But he declined the proposal for the present. Having no immediate engagement in England, he accepted an invitation from Sir Ro-

bert Rich, one of the Lords of the Admiralty, to his seat near Beccles in Suffolk, and was induced by him to officiate as minister to a small dissenting congregation at Lowestoff, in that county. Here he remained about a year and a half, though without formally undertaking the pastoral charge. During his residence at Lowestoff he maintained a friendly intercourse with the clergyman of the place, accompanying him in making collections for the public charities, and occasionally attending with part of his congregation upon his public services. This was conformable, as we have seen, to his practice while in Ireland, and was by no means inconsistent with his principles ; for he was not as yet a dissenter from the doctrines of the church, and he had too much liberality to make the minor matters of difference in discipline and ceremonial an insuperable bar to communion.

At this period, however, he also formed an intimate acquaintance with Mr. W. Manning, a worthy dissenting minister at Peasenhall, in his neighbourhood. Their congenial habits and pursuits occasioned frequent meetings, and they engaged together in theological inquiries, mutually communicating to each other their respective sentiments and conclusions ; in which, as it happened, they were both led to deviate widely from the opinions then generally prevalent. The doctrine of the Trinity in particular they agreed, first in doubting, and at length in rejecting altogether. Mr. Manning embraced the Socinian view, but could not prevail on his friend to concur with him, as he could not satisfy himself with the Socinian interpretation of the texts usually brought to prove the pre-existence of our Saviour as the great Spirit or Logos

by whose instrumentality God created the material world. He therefore espoused what has since been called the High Arian hypothesis, in which he continued during the rest of his life. In these sentiments he agreed nearly with Whiston, Clarke, Peirce, and many other eminent divines of that and the immediately succeeding age, whose celebrity for a long period gave the Arian scheme the preference over that of Socinus.

When James II. was driven back to France, and affairs in Ireland assumed a more peaceable and settled appearance, Mr. Emlyn was induced to accept a second overture to become joint pastor with Mr. Joseph Boyse of the Presbyterian congregation in Wood Street, Dublin. To this city he accordingly removed in 1691; and here he continued in a station of great comfort and prosperity for nearly twelve years. Mr. Emlyn appears to have been a highly popular and acceptable preacher, and the sermons of his which have reached us, prove that he was very deservedly so. They are at once rational, persuasive, and pathetic; and when the subject calls for it, often rise to a high strain of eloquence. He is said also to have been particularly excellent and attentive in discharging the more private duties of a Christian minister. A few years after he settled at Dublin he married Mrs. Esther Bury, a widow lady with a handsome jointure; and thus being possessed of an easy competence, successful and acceptable in the discharge of his ministerial duties, apparently respected and beloved by his congregation and friends, and peculiarly blest in his domestic relations, he seemed to enjoy the fairest prospect of permanent and increasing usefulness, and of a reasonable share

of temporal respectability and comfort. But it had pleased a wise Providence to order it otherwise, and dark clouds were presently destined to overshadow the scene which for some time appeared so bright and promising.

Mr. Emlyn had not as yet divulged his abandonment of the prevailing views of the Trinity, which were zealously maintained by his colleague, and doubtless by at least a large majority of his congregation. He abstained from touching upon controverted topics in the pulpit, where his discourses were for the most part practical; though their morality was invariably founded upon the precepts, and carefully enforced by the peculiar motives and sanctions suggested by the Christian scriptures.

“I own” (he tells us in his very interesting narrative of the proceedings against him) “I had been unsettled in my notions from the time I read Dr. Sherlock’s book of the Trinity, which sufficiently discovered how far many were gone back towards polytheism; I long tried what I could do with some Sabellian turns, making out a Trinity of *somewhats* in one single mind. I found out that, by the tritheistical scheme of Dr. Sherlock and Mr. Howe, I best preserved a trinity, but I lost the unity; by the Sabellian scheme of modes and subsistences, and properties, &c., I best kept up the divine unity; but then I had lost a trinity, such as the Scripture discovers, so that I could never keep both in view at once. Till I had upon much serious thought and study of the holy scriptures, with many concerned addresses to the Father of lights, found great reason first to doubt, and after by degrees to alter my judgment, in

relation to the formerly received opinions of the trinity and the *Supreme Deity* of our Lord Jesus Christ. For though the word of God was my rule, I could not tell how to understand that rule but by the use of my reason; knowing well, that he who tells me I must lay aside my reason when I believe the gospel, does plainly declare that to believe it is to act without reason, and that no rational man could be a Christian. I desired only to know *what* I must believe, and *why*. As to the latter, I was satisfied that divine revelation is a sufficient ground of belief; but then I must conceive what it is that it reveals, and that I am explicitly to believe and profess. Accordingly I was ever careful not to speak against my own judgment, or what should appear so to a judicious hearer, that I might not act against Christian sincerity; and yet I never confronted the opinions of others by express or unhandsome opposition; I doubted whether this was my duty, or proper in the pulpit, where I could not have freedom to say all that was requisite in such a controversy, and whether I ought at once to cast myself out of a station of service without a more particular and direct occasion given me to profess my mind, which I did apprehend might offer, and which I was determined to accept when it did."

Thus it appears that with Emlyn, as it has since been with Lindsey, Robertson, and many others who have finally sacrificed their worldly prospects for the sake of the truth, the adoption of so decided a step was a subject of much serious and anxious deliberation, and was delayed even for years beyond the time when the change of doctrinal sentiment had been fully completed.

While this subject was dwelling on his mind, his domestic happiness was painfully interrupted, first by the death of an infant son, and afterwards (towards the end of 1701) by that of his wife. On this latter occasion he preached a sermon from John xiv. 28. "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said I go to my Father; for my Father is greater than I." This sermon was afterwards printed, (during the darkest season of his own approaching personal troubles,) under the title of "Funeral Consolations," and contains many passages which for eloquence, pathos, and true Christian feeling, are not surpassed by any thing in our language. He makes no distinct allusion or express mention of the lamented subject of his discourse, but towards the close, delicately but indirectly portrays her character in the following passage. After describing in a strain of eloquence and lively imagination, purified and enlightened by Christian faith, the great things reserved for those that are gone to the Father, and the consolation to be reaped by survivors from these reflections, he proceeds as follows :

"All this is most true, when we can say of our deceased friends that they are gone to the Father, and this on solid grounds. When we have known them by divine grace powerfully biassed towards God, holiness, and heaven, as the great centre of all their desires and aims; when we have seen them shine with the Redeemer's image in great meekness and humility, great inoffensiveness and tender goodness towards all,—when we have found them possessed and governed by a conscientious dread of offending God or man, (perhaps in some instances too scrupulous,) diligent also in the daily

duties of secret piety and devotion, with reverence and great seriousness; when we have seen them faithful in all their relative capacities, as therein serving the Lord, as well as man; when they have been eminently mortified to this vain world, to all the gaiety and bravery, the interests, diversions and pleasures of this life, and that in years and circumstances very capable of such temptations, and this because they rather chose the *better part* which shall never be taken away; when we have beheld their submissive patience and christian resignation to God, under misery; and after all great humility in an abasing sense of their unworthiness and need of mercy; but yet supporting their faith with honourable thoughts of the divine goodness, and a sense of their own sincerity, so as with hope and strong desires to breathe out their departing souls into their Redeemer's hands, welcoming his approaches with 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;'—when we can thus describe our friends, (and I know well whom I could thus imperfectly describe,) why should we not conclude *they are gone to the Father?* And why should we not rejoice in all the comforts of that consideration? How unreasonable is our immoderate sorrow, when all the rest of their friends rejoice! For, as themselves rejoice to go to the Father, so the blessed God, their Father, has welcomed them with joy to their everlasting home; Jesus Christ has presented them as his crown and joy, without spot or blemish; holy angels and spirits congratulate their arrival to their society, and cannot be supposed to rejoice less at the consummation of their victorious warfare than at its beginning in their con-

version; and shall we alone be swallowed up in sorrow? Rather let us comfort one another with these words, and ascend after them in holy desires to be in the same state and place."

In the Preface there is an affecting reference to the hard and injurious treatment under which he was at that time labouring. After adverting to the delay which had taken place in the publication of this sermon, "I must own," he proceeds, "that I had probably done it sooner, had I not been diverted by many troubles; the issue of which has been such as has not only given me more leisure to review this sermon, but also more occasion often to retire to a serious contemplation of the matters therein contained. What my sufferings (for a principle of conscience) have been, or for what cause I suffered as *an evil-doer even unto bonds*, I intend not here to complain. It suffices me to leave my complaint with God, whom I desire to serve according to my best understanding; and if I may but please Him, the *judge* and giver of the *prize*, I shall be less anxious for the applause of *spectators*, who must themselves be judged also.

"But as to that dispensation of Providence which occasioned this discourse, I do therein, with great reverence and satisfaction, adore the righteous wisdom of the Supreme Lord of life and death, by whose appointment, according to the Prophet's observation (Isaiah lvii. 1), righteous and merciful men are taken away from the evil to come. For, considering what was in the womb of Providence, and so near to its birth, I cannot but reckon it an apparent design of mercy to her who is deceased, that she should be carried into

the quiet harbour before so furious a tempest did arise, which might have made too cruel impressions on a disposition so very gentle and tender. But she was gathered to her grave in peace, that she might not behold it. Moreover, by such a rebuke, so adapted to strike at the root of all earthly love and delight, the all-wise God might greatly prepare him who was to survive for better enduring his approaching trials; since thereby neither the prosperity nor the adversity of this world could be any great temptation to one who had less reason than ever to be fond of this life, and so loud an admonition never to seek his contentment on this side God and heaven. Lord, what wait I for?—my hope is in Thee.”

It was about nine months after Mrs. Emlyn's decease that a leading member of the congregation, being struck not so much with any thing positive in Mr. Emlyn's preaching or other public services, as with the absence of all reference to certain orthodox doctrines on occasions when a man who had no doubts or difficulties on these points would scarcely have omitted them, communicated his suspicions to Mr. Boyse, the other minister. They jointly waited on Mr. Emlyn, and requested to know what his real sentiments on the subject were. When thus called upon, he did not hesitate to acknowledge, or rather openly to declare, what his faith was; and avowed himself convinced that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is alone the Supreme Being, superior in excellence and authority to his Son, who derives all from him. He told them at the same time, that he had no aim to make any strife among them, and offered to leave the congregation, that

they might choose another in his place. This, however, was not the course they chose to adopt. Mr. Boyse brought the affair before a meeting of the presbyterian ministers in Dublin, who seem to have been allowed to exercise a sort of controul and inquisitorial interference in the concerns of other congregations, which those of us who in this country still call ourselves by that name are at a loss to comprehend. A conference took place between Mr. E. and this conclave, at which he candidly explained his sentiments, and they, without further deliberation or delay, cast him off, and decreed that he should not preach any more; and this without any communication with his own flock, the only parties who had any real concern in the affair, of which as yet they were utterly ignorant. Mr. E. immediately called the deacons and other managers of the church together, acquainted them with the circumstances, and requested their dismissal. To this they were unwilling to accede, but proposed to him to go away presently into England for awhile, to afford time for further consideration. The ministers gave their sanction to the arrangement, but withal charged him not to preach during his absence. To this imperious mandate he returned a spirited reply, asserting his undoubted right and full determination to use his discretion in this matter without asking for their permission. He accordingly departed for England, though with great personal inconvenience, the very next day.

“And now,” says he, “I had leisure to look back; for when so few days’ space had made so great a change in my condition, that I was turned out to wander abroad desolate and in uncertainty, I saw

I was entered upon a dark scene, and must arm for various, though I knew not what, trials.—I had not been of so unsocial a nature as not to relish the society and love of my dear friends, nor yet so mortified to the world as not to feel some difference between contempt and respect, fulness and straits; but still my convictions of truth were so clear, that these things never staggered my resolutions of adhering to it in the midst of all discouragements. Yet Mr. Boyse, in the preface to his Answer to my Humble Inquiry, taxes me with insincerity in continuing so long in communion with those of a different persuasion. But as I think it was matter deserving of great deliberation, so I did not see any thing sinful required of me: we worshiped one God through Jesus Christ the Mediator, and I had my part in leading the devotions of the society. We had no worship of *three modes* expressed; and other men's different confused notions did not affect my worship when not imposed on me, who still say that, if they worshiped but one infinite Supreme Mind, they worshiped the same object of supreme worship with me; and as for the secret worship of *three modes*, of which there is not one word in scripture, I understand no more than themselves what they mean by those terms, or rather they mean nothing at all by them that I can find; and I am persuaded that not three of the whole church could agree in the same rational account, if put to it, of these matters."

On his return to Ireland, Mr. Emlyn found that a great clamour had been raised against him in his absence, both in the pulpit and elsewhere: he therefore thought that justice to himself as

well as to the truth required that he should shew what evidence from the scriptures he had on his side, and accordingly he wrote and published his "Humble Inquiry into the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ." In this tract, after acknowledging that the title God is in some instances applied to Christ, he shews that this term is used in scripture in various senses, supreme and subordinate, and that the former is reserved exclusively to the Father;—that our Lord Jesus speaks of another as God distinct from himself, and owns this God to be his superior; while he disclaims those infinite perfections which belong only to the Supreme God, as underived power, absolute goodness, unlimited knowledge. He examines the texts which are usually cited to the contrary of these positions. He afterwards answers the argument deduced from the worship, or more properly honour and reverence, due to the Lord Jesus; shewing that no supreme worship is offered to him, and that, if it were, it would be inconsistent with the character with which he is invested of a Mediator between God and men.

As soon as might be after the appearance of this tract, it was Mr. Emlyn's intention to have returned to England. Some however of the more bigoted and hot-headed dissenters (with singular inconsistency, considering that they themselves had at this very time in Ireland no legal toleration, but were only *connived* at) were resolved to have him prosecuted, and with this view procured a warrant from the Chief Justice, Sir Richard Pyne, to seize the author and his books. The Chief Justice was at first disposed to refuse bail, but afterwards consented, and two sufficient persons

were bound in £800 for his appearance. The indictment, after having been three several times altered before it could be finally settled, occasioned the trial to be postponed till June 14, 1703. On that day, before the court sat, Mr. Emlyn was apprised by an eminent counsel that he would not be permitted to speak freely, but that it was determined to run him down like a wolf, without law, or game; and he soon found that this was not said without sufficient reason. Six or seven bishops were present, including the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, who took their seats upon the bench. "If," says Mr. E., "they had used arguments with me, or had informed the court how unfit a jury of tradesmen were to judge of abstruse points of divinity, or had protested, as holy bishops of old did, against that strange and unheard-of impiety, that a spiritual or church affair should come before a secular judicature, I should have thought it would have been to their praise."

There was no little difficulty in procuring legal evidence that Mr. Emlyn was the author of the book; and it was not so much *proved* at last, as taken for granted on the presumptive ground of a conformity between the opinions maintained in it, and those which he had professed in conference with Mr. Boyse and his brother ministers. And the main question still remained, whether what was quoted from the book was blasphemy. But this was never spoken to at all. "I intended," says Mr. E., "after the matter of fact was over, to have spoken on this head; and to have shewn how unreasonable it was to account that blasphemy which, for the *manner* of it, had not been uttered with any token of a designed con-

tempt; and, for the *matter* of it, was not very different from what divers learned men and dignitaries of the church had published. I could have shewn that men of great probity and character differ very much about these matters; and that, if a mere error must be judged blasphemy by a party of the contrary opinion, then may any thing be judged such, let but the adverse party have the drawing of the consequences. But my counsel would say nothing on this head on my behalf, and they would not let me speak for myself: when I offered it, the Queen's counsel turned upon me, and cried, Speak by your counsel."

The Chief Justice seems to have acted the part of an accuser rather than of a judge; and the jury, intimidated by his representation, and probably overawed by the unwonted presence of so many dignitaries of the church, brought in, but with apparent reluctance, a verdict of guilty. When the verdict was pronounced, the Attorney-general moved that the prisoner might have the honour of the *pillory*; but sentence was deferred till the last day of the term, and in the mean time he was committed to the common gaol. During this interval, Mr. Boyse, who, if he had not been actively concerned in the previous arbitrary and violent proceedings, certainly did not express that dislike of them as carried on by others, nor of such methods of persecution in general which might have been expected of a Christian minister, seems to have shewn more concern for his former friend and colleague, and exerted himself to prevent the rigorous sentence the Attorney-general had moved for. Mr. Emlyn himself also addressed the following letter to the Chief Justice on his own behalf:—

“ My Lord,

“ Though your Lordship may perhaps judge me guilty of a fault that you cannot admit any apology for, yet I may presume upon so much compassion as to have leave to offer something by way of mitigation. I do assure your Lordship, that I have no greater desire than to learn the truth from the Holy Scriptures, by which I shall always be guided according to my best light; and if I am mistaken in my opinions, God knows, it is altogether unwillingly. It is most obvious that I have forfeited my interest and sacrificed my reputation in the world, and exposed myself to such evils as nothing could ever make me submit to, but the real fear of offending God; which your Lordship will, I doubt not, allow for a very great reason. I am ready to do any thing consistent with my judgment and conscience; but I am ashamed to do that for fear of shame from men, for which my conscience may suggest to me that Jesus Christ will be ashamed of me at the great day. I imagine, by something spoken on my trial, that your Lordship conceived I had written some deriding, scornful expressions of the holy Jesus, which I am sure I never designed; the sum of the whole book being only to shew the Father to be greater than he, not denying him any glory consistent with that. I hope that, as the great and merciful God will sooner forgive many errors of the understanding than one wilful crime, so your Lordship will make a considerable difference between disputable errors, which men of probity and learning are divided about, and scurrilous reflections on the blessed Jesus, which are intended for contempt, and which my soul shall ever abhor. I shall only presume to add, that as it is entirely for my con-

science that I suffer, so I can never be deprived of the comfortable support which such a consideration carries in it; having, I hope, learned in some measure to be conformed to Him who endured the cross, and who will shortly appear the righteous Judge of all. Knowing how much depends on your Lordship's favour and clemency as to the penalty I am liable to, I entreat for it; and am,

“Your Lordship's, &c.”

When he appeared to receive judgment, and refused to retract, the Chief Justice sentenced him to suffer a year's imprisonment, to pay a thousand pounds to the Queen, to be imprisoned till the fine was paid, and to find security for good behaviour during life. Instead of the pillory, which he was told was dispensed with because he was a man of letters, he was led round the four courts with a paper on his breast to be exposed. After passing this severe sentence, the judge added insult to injury by magnifying its clemency; reminding the prisoner, that if this case had been tried in Spain or Portugal, the stake would have been his portion! It is remarkable that the process upon the writ *de hæretico comburendo* had been abolished in Ireland only seven or eight years before; “else I know not,” says Mr. E. “but I might have been put to the fiery trial, which I hope I should have been enabled to endure, through Him whose grace is sufficient.”

After sentence, he was closely confined in the house of the Under-sheriff for about a quarter of a year, but was then transferred to the common gaol, where he lay for five or six weeks in a close

room surrounded by the other prisoners ; but was afterwards removed, on petition for the sake of his health, to the Marshalsea, where he had more accommodation. Here he wrote his "General Remarks on Mr. Boyse's Vindication of the True Deity of our blessed Saviour." In this situation he remained for two years (his imprisonment being prolonged in consequence of the non-payment of his fine), during which time he feelingly complains in his narrative, that most of those with whom he had before been on the most familiar terms seemed estranged from him, and did not vouchsafe him even the poor and cheap favour of a visit. Mr. Boyse was almost the only exception, who at length made exertions to procure his enlargement, and a mitigation of the heavy fine, which was utterly beyond his ability to pay.

In this gentleman's conduct through the whole affair there seems to have been a degree of vacillation and inconsistency, for which it is not easy to account. By persisting in laying the case before the other ministers, whom he knew to be bigoted, narrow-minded, violent men, he certainly was the means, in the first instance, of bringing on the persecution, though very probably he was far from anticipating the length to which matters would be carried, or the serious consequences which ensued. But the publication of his reply to Mr. Emlyn's Humble Inquiry, even before the trial came on, in which the theological argument was accompanied with many unnecessarily harsh and irritating expressions, was, to say the least of it, unseasonable and precipitate ;—not dictated, one would think, by the feelings which might have been expected towards one with whom (in

whatever error he might now think him involved) he had been for so many years connected on terms of such intimacy and friendship. Mr. Emlyn's own remarks on this subject are conceived in a truly Christian and forgiving spirit. "Mr. Boyse made several attempts for my liberty; whose kindness I thankfully acknowledge, in that with great concern and much labour he pursued it from time to time, which has abundantly confirmed my affection and respects to him, and extinguished all uneasy resentments. I am sensible that what he did against me was with regret and grief,—what he did for me was with choice and pleasure. So that I hope nothing in this history shall be any diminution to the character of his great worth and good temper, who endeavoured to allay the common odium against me as far as he could, *without the loss of his own reputation*. At length, through his frequent solicitations for a reducement of my fine, and by a very friendly and generous gentleman's help,* I obtained the then Duke of Ormond's favour, who gave directions to the commissioners of reducement to reduce my fine to a hundred marks, according to the Lord Chancellor's favourable report, (to whom my petition had been referred,) that such exorbitant fines were against the law."

Thus at length, but with difficulty, this heavy, and (as it appears) *illegal* fine was reduced to seventy pounds, which was paid into her Majesty's exchequer. But the Archbishop of Armagh, who (as Queen's Almoner!) had a claim, it seems, of a shilling in the pound on all fines, was not to be

* Thomas Medlicote, Esq.

thus satisfied, but insisted for some time on the full amount of his per-centage on the whole fine. At last, after several applications and letters, he was beat down to twenty pounds, which he had the meanness to take ; “ thinking it no blemish to his charity or generosity to make this advantage of the misery of one who for conscience towards God had endured grief.”

On July 21, 1705, upon giving security by two bondsmen for good behaviour during life, Mr. E. obtained relief from his tedious imprisonment. “ And now after all, (to adopt his own concluding words, in the very interesting narrative he has left us of this affair,) I thank my most merciful God and Father, that as he called me not to this lot of suffering till I was arrived at some maturity of judgment and firmness of resolution, so he left me not when my friends and acquaintance forsook me ; that he supported my spirit to endure this trial of my faith without wavering ; that I was never so cast down as to be tempted to renounce the truth ; that he preserved my health under this long confinement ; that I had a few friends who were a comfort to me in my bonds, (the Lord grant that they may find mercy of the Lord in that day!) that he inclined any in authority to shew at last compassion to me ; that he has brought me out of prison, and set my feet in a large place ; that I have yet food and raiment left me ; and, above all, that he has given me a mind, I think, as well contented with it as ever I was in my greatest prosperity. I am content to want the kind and vain respects of the world, and to give up my name to mistaken reproach ; or to lose it, if that may be, in silent unregarded

obscurity. I have suffered the loss of many things, and do not repent; but upon the review, I do still count it all but loss and dung, if it has in any way advanced the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

During Mr. Emlyn's confinement in the Marshalsea prison, he procured the use of a large room, where he preached to such of the debtors as came to hear him, and to several of the lower class of his former hearers, who resorted to him there, when their *bettors* were for the most part restrained by the fear of man, and whose continued affection and attachment was a great source of consolation to him. After his release, he shortly removed to London, where he preached for some time to a small congregation of friends who entertained similar opinions with himself, but without receiving any salary, though his income was now much reduced, his wife's jointure having passed to her children by her former marriage. This, however, was, after a few years, dissolved by the death of the principal members, and he had not afterwards any ministerial engagement, but retired into a silent obscurity, but not into idleness, as he appeared occasionally before the public as the author of various able tracts, both in support of the principles for which he had suffered so much, and on other theological questions. Many of these were afterwards collected into a volume printed in 1719, to which is prefixed the interesting narrative from which we have given several extracts of the proceedings against him at Dublin.

His first publication was a short letter to Dr. Willis, Dean of Lincoln, remonstrating against

his attempt, in a sermon preached before the House of Commons, to vindicate the penal laws against the Catholics on religious grounds. If these laws were to be justified at all, which in this tract he does not call in question, it must be from political considerations, and those only. How far it was reasonable at any time to take for granted, as he seems to do, that all Catholics as such were necessarily hostile to the existing political constitution, and that they ought on that account to be visited with coercive laws, we shall not here inquire; but, in protesting against visiting them with persecution or civil disabilities on the ground of their religious opinions merely, he shews himself to have fully probed a question, which, even at that late period, was by no means so clearly and generally understood as it is at present.

Shortly afterwards (in 1706) appeared "A Vindication of the Worship of the Lord Jesus Christ on Unitarian Principles;" in answer to Mr. Boyse. This is an elaborate performance, displaying very considerable acuteness and ability; and many of the texts on which Trinitarians are accustomed chiefly to rely, are very satisfactorily explained. He proposes to establish two points; *first*, that the Holy Scriptures do never require us to pay *divine worship* to our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, as he is distinct from the Father who dwells in him and is worshiped by us; *secondly*, that they do allow and require us to pay him our inferior religious worship. Under the first of these heads, his argument is distinct and conclusive: he contends that there is no instance in the New Testament of prayer to Jesus Christ

when absent and invisible ; and that all the cases (very few in number) which are thought to encourage the contrary idea, both admit and require a different interpretation. Again, with respect to what may be called the internal acts of worship, as faith, love, and reverence, it is obvious, that all these sentiments may be entertained towards one whom we honour as the most distinguished messenger of God. We may have faith in his message, because we believe it to come from God ; we may love him in sincerity, with fervent gratitude to so great a benefactor, believing him, nevertheless, to be the instrument or agent of a still greater benefactor ; our esteem and rational love must ascend higher, and not rest till it centre in his God and ours. Under the second proposition there is a perceptible confusion in his own argument, arising out of the ambiguity still attaching (and in his time still more than at present) to the term *worship* : and his proof does not, in fact, establish his point, but merely goes to prove what all Unitarians, of whatever grade or denomination, will be equally ready to admit, that the homage we pay to our Redeemer and Mediator is of a subordinate nature, implying an acknowledgment of his character as the instrument or servant of his Father, under whose direction he acted, and whose words he spake, in the whole work of our salvation. If by *religious* worship in this argument be meant the cultivation of the highest degree of love, attachment, and reverence, which can be cherished towards a creature, higher than we can or ought to feel towards any *other* creature, it is admitted. But if it imply any direct devotional address to

him, or any petition offered to him, either for benefits which he is expected to confer, or for his mediation and intercession with the Father, then there is no authority for any thing of this kind, either from reason or scripture. Not from reason, because Christ's being the hearer and answerer of prayer, would imply an omnipresence which is the exclusive attribute of deity; not from scripture, because it appears, and Mr. Emlyn has himself distinctly shewn, that there exists no instance in the New Testament of any direct address to Jesus, except where he was, or was believed to be, personally and sensibly *present*. Moreover, it seems to us to be clearly inconsistent with our Saviour's express command, "In that day, ye shall ask me nothing; but whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John xvi. 23.

Our author lays considerable stress on the character ascribed to Christ as a Mediator *of worship*. "It must be granted," he says, "that Jesus Christ as a Mediator of worship, is as really supposed to know our prayers and wants, as when he is an object of it. If the man Jesus Christ does intreat for us, if he be our advocate, then in all reason he must know our case before he pleads it. God, who exalted him to that office, has in some way or other capacitated him for it; and this is a sufficient ground for *worshiping* him as Mediator, though it be far from implying him to be equal in perfection to that God with whom he intercedes, and consequently is no ground for truly *divine* worship."—If I understand this argument, it proceeds on the supposition that Christ is in such a sense Mediator between God and men, that he is the

medium of presenting our petitions to the Father: otherwise, what necessity would there be for his possessing, as it is contended he must do in this capacity, an accurate knowledge of all our circumstances, prayers, and wants? But there is no scriptural warrant for ascribing to him any such character as this.

The tendency of directing our thoughts upon different persons or objects of worship to degrade our conceptions of the infinite perfections of the Divine nature is strikingly illustrated in the following passage:—

“The supposed *economy* of the Divine nature carries with it many injurious reflections on the honour and perfections of the blessed God. It supposes that it is a happiness for one person of the Trinity to have all the government in his hands, and to get the whole from the other two; so that it seems it is not so well for that person when the Father has his part again; for this sole exercise they call a *privilege*; and therefore when the Son delivers up the kingdom, he is supposed to resign a great privilege of his Divine nature.

“We have sometimes been told that society in the Divine nature is delicious and a great happiness; and therefore that there are emanations of several persons. But then how comes it to pass that society in *government* is so *grievous*, that it should be such a *privilege* for one of them to have the others’ rights conferred upon him? Sure that society should be as pleasing in government as in any thing else. And it should be the best for the three persons to rule alike, as they did before Christ’s reward, and must do again hereafter;

when it is supposed that all will revert to their natural order, and then Father, Son, and Holy Ghost shall be jointly concerned in the administration of government.

“ On the whole, I cannot but lament to see how wofully the holy Christian religion is by such *invented* absurdities as these exposed to the grievous scorn of infidels, while they see such schemes as this, representing God, his Son, and Spirit, not only as three several men for distinction, but also as to their temper and way of management; making them to parcel out the divine regimen, and one to devolve his part on the other, (as the Son at first leaves his rights with the Father, say the Trinitarians,) and then to receive in his turn the other's part for a reward and gift, and then to give back again as at the last day the Son must. As if, like ambitious mortals who furiously scramble for dominion, and labour to undermine each other, it were so among the three persons of the Godhead, that one should account himself raised to honour and privilege by the other's divesting himself and leaving all to him. So that one may plainly see it were more for the Divine glory and happiness that there were but one person in God, since he would have all the *privilege* of ruling without a sharer or competitor; which, no doubt, is the real truth of all. To such sad derision do some bold disposers of God Almighty expose him, as if they thought him, and had a mind to teach others that he is, altogether such as themselves! Are *these* the venerable mysteries of Christianity? of which I find not one word in holy writ; and therefore they must answer for the shame done to Christianity hereby,

who have dared by such strained artifices to distort and abuse holy scripture, that they may impose these violent absurdities upon the gospel."

In 1707 our author printed two tracts; one entitled "The Supreme Deity of God the Father demonstrated, against Dr. Sherlock;" and the other "A Vindication of the Bishop of Gloucester (Dr. Fowler) from the Charge of Heresy brought against him by Dr. Sherlock." In these tracts, which are written with great smartness, he very dexterously sets against each other the two opposite parties of Trinitarians, sometimes called the Realists and the Nominalists, who were at that time engaged in a very animated controversy, and who carried matters to such a length that it would seem as if each party was worse in the estimation of the other than even the Socinians were in that of either.

In the next year appeared three tracts, in reply to Mr. Leslie, on the same general controversy, but remarkable for a particularly sound and judicious view of the argument on what is called the "satisfaction to the Divine justice for the sins of men in the sufferings and death of Christ." The personal controversy involved in these pieces has long since lost its interest, and references to it interfere occasionally with the cause of the reasoning; otherwise there are few works which contain in a smaller compass a more distinct and satisfactory statement of the views commonly maintained by Unitarians on this subject. The only objection which presents itself, and which is equally applicable to the very acute and judicious review of this argument in the Racovian catechism, arises from the use which is made of the term *sacrifice*, and even *expiatory sacrifice*, in speaking

of the death of Christ. It is true these terms are so explained as to do away with the inference founded upon their employment in scripture by the patrons of the common doctrine of satisfaction, that Christ is to be considered as our *substitute*, bearing the punishment due to our sins from vindictive justice; but still there is a degree of confusion arising from the unnecessary introduction of this phraseology, and one is almost inclined to suspect a sort of lurking wish by the use of familiar terms commonly understood in an orthodox sense, to beguile some into an acceptance of the doctrine recommended, who would have been startled by the exhibition of it in an undisguised form.

In 1710, a remarkable tract appeared from Mr. Emlyn's pen, entitled, "The previous Question relating to Baptism." Before entering upon the controversy between the advocates of infant and adult baptism, it appears necessary first to settle the question, 'What reason we have for supposing that baptism under any form was prescribed as an ordinance of perpetual obligation, to be practised not on converts merely, but on the offspring of Christian parents?' Mr. Emlyn, though disposed on the whole to agree with the pædo-baptists, supposing this "previous question" to be granted, is rather disposed to answer it in the negative; and, among other arguments, urges the undeniable fact, that no instance is to be found in the New Testament of the baptism of either the infant or the adult descendants of persons already members of the church. If there were any cases of the baptism of infants, (which is only a somewhat doubtful inference from Acts xvi., 15 and 33,) these were baptized

at the time of the conversion of the parents; and such baptism was a part of the ceremonial by which the *parents*, not the children, were admitted as disciples. The argument is plausibly maintained, and deserves the attention of both the contending parties.

The whole of this controversy is well fitted to teach one practical lesson, which has, however, been as little attended to in this case as in any other; namely, Christian charity and forbearance. For, to whatever opinion any one may incline, if he is candid, and has *really* studied the subject, he can hardly, one would think, perceive such a preponderance of argument in favour of his own conclusion, as to make it at all wonderful to him that others should think differently. While therefore, even with respect to those disputed points on which his own opinions are most decided, such a one would readily offer the right hand of fellowship to those who had conscientiously adopted a different sentiment,—in *this* case, almost above all others, he would refrain from expressing *any* opinion so positively as to imply that, if others do not agree with him, it must be the effect of improper bias or prejudice.

In 1715, Mr. Emlyn entered the field of biblical criticism with an able and learned view of the argument against the genuineness of the text of the three heavenly witnesses (1 John v. 7). This was answered by a Mr. Martin, pastor of a French church at the Hague, to whom our author published a reply. Martin returned to the charge; but Mr. Emlyn, thinking that the argument was exhausted, was contented, as he well might, to leave his antagonist in possession of the field.

There can be no doubt that the series of tracts of which we have now given a short account, had a considerable effect in keeping up the public attention to the Trinitarian controversy, and in promoting a more extensive diffusion, under one modification or another, of Unitarian sentiments, especially among those who then began to be called (or to call *themselves*) by way of distinction, the *liberal* dissenters. And he lived to see a very marked and considerable change in this respect, from the time when he seemed almost to stand alone and unfriended to bear the brunt of persecution in its most formidable shape. Nevertheless, for some reasons not very clearly explained, there seems to have been a sort of jealousy, which prevented his admission to many pulpits among the London dissenters; and, after the dissolution of his own little society, he speaks of himself as almost a *silenced man*; so as to be sometimes ready to lament himself as an unprofitable servant, turned out of his Master's service. The only exceptions to this remark whose names have been mentioned, are Mr. Burroughs, and Mr. (afterwards the celebrated Dr.) James Foster, Ministers of the Baptist congregation at the Barbican. His talents and learning were, however, estimated at their due value by some of those who were most competent to appreciate them; and he was admitted to the intimate friendship of several persons of high distinction and eminence, particularly Dr. Samuel Clarke and Mr. Whiston; who nearly agreed with him in religious opinions, and the latter of whom had suffered for his principles, though not to the same extent. In 1726, on the death of the excellent Mr. James Peirce, of Exe-

ter, it was proposed to invite Mr. Emlyn to become his successor. As soon, however, as he was acquainted with it, he requested them to desist, thanking them for their respectful attention to him, and excusing himself from accepting an invitation on the ground of his declining years and increasing infirmities. He was naturally of a very cheerful and lively temper, and enjoyed a good state of health through the greater part of his life, the gout excepted, which by degrees impaired his constitution, and to which he finally fell a sacrifice on the thirtieth of July 1743, in the eighty-first year of his age.

The name of *Thomas Emlyn* well deserves to be had in affectionate remembrance and veneration by those, whatever their religious sentiments may be, who duly value simplicity and godly sincerity, and the genuine graces of the Christian character made manifest not only in sufferings for conscience' sake, but in unaffected piety and purity of life. He is chiefly known to posterity as a venerable confessor, who rejoiced that he was thought worthy to suffer shame and loss and imprisonment for the cause of Gospel truth. But he was not less remarkable for a meek devotion, and for the practical influence of Christian principles, which were equally his guides in prosperity, while all men spake well of him, and his consolation and effectual support in the period of adversity and persecution. Others have gone through more severe bodily sufferings, but none have displayed in their conduct and their sentiments more of the spirit of Him who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again."

Mr. Emlyn's tracts, the greater part of which

have been enumerated in the preceding memoir, were collected and republished in two volumes, in 1746, with a life of the author by his son, Sollom Emlyn, Esq., who was bred to the legal profession, in which he attained considerable eminence. Besides these, a posthumous volume was published of sermons, which are of a character to induce the judicious reader to wish that a more copious selection had been made.

Note.—Mr. W. Manning was one of the venerable two thousand whose names were immortalized in the recollection of all true lovers of religious liberty on Bartholomew's day, 1662. He was ejected from Middleton, in the county of Suffolk. In Palmer's Non-conformist's Memorial, he is described as "a man of great abilities and learning, *but* he fell into the Socinian principles, to which he adhered till his death, which was in February, 1711." Descendants of this gentleman are still respected members of several of our churches.

JAMES PEIRCE.

THE name of *James Peirce* will ever occupy a conspicuous place in the annals of religious liberty. It was not his lot, like the worthies we have already commemorated, to contend against the magistrate and the judge, wielding the terrors of the law in support of an established faith. The parties with whom he had to deal were happily divested of these formidable attributes, and unable to visit their opponents with fine and imprisonment; but they gave ample proof that the spirit was not wanting; and if they did not assume the character of persecutors in the worst sense, it was from a deficiency of power rather than of inclination. Their proceedings, we fear, shewed but too plainly, that the old leaven was far from being as completely worn out as might have been supposed: there is, however, every reason to think, that the controversy excited on the occasion, notwithstanding the heat and violence with which it was conducted, was mainly instrumental in opening the eyes of great numbers to more just and liberal views, both of religious truth, and of the proper mode of conducting religious inquiries. In this way the wrath of man is made to work out the righteousness of God, and his vehement passions and contentions with his brethren are over-ruled and directed to better purposes than were intended; so that what

good men deplored at the time as a miserable and mortifying display of unholy zeal and unchristian principles and feelings, became ultimately the means not only of promoting the further diffusion of the doctrines everywhere spoken against, but of checking the growth of priestly domination and of spiritual pride, lording it over the consciences of men, which are so inconsistent with the true spirit of the gospel of peace.

Mr. Peirce was the son of respectable parents in good circumstances, and was born in London, in the year 1673. Having the misfortune to lose his parents early in life, he was placed under the care of Mr. Matthew Mead, an eminent Non-conformist minister at Stepney, and father of the celebrated Dr. Mead. After a suitable course of preparatory instruction, partly in the house of his guardian and partly at various grammar schools, he was sent, according to a practice not uncommon among the English dissenters of that period, to pursue his theological studies in Holland, first at the University of Utrecht, and afterwards at the sister seminary of Leyden. At both these celebrated seats of learning the principal chairs were at that time occupied by a constellation of eminent men, whose fame drew to them a concourse of students from all the Protestant countries of Europe. Among these the names of Wittsius, Grævius, Burmann, Leusden, Gronovius, Spanheim, &c., are still remembered with respect in the republic of letters.

Having passed several years in each of these universities, Mr. Peirce returned to England, and shortly afterwards spent some time at Oxford, not however as a member of the university, but

in private lodgings, for the purpose of resorting to the Bodleian library. After preaching occasionally for some time to various congregations of dissenters in and near London, chiefly among the Presbyterians, but without mixing himself up with the controversies at that period agitated with so much vehemence between the Presbyterians and Independents, he settled as minister to a congregation at Cambridge. How long he continued in this situation we have no means of ascertaining; but it appears that he had the opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of several men of talent and eminence in the university: among the rest the celebrated Whiston. From hence we may safely conclude, that he had already acquired a fair reputation for ability and attainments; for a dissenting minister immediately under the shade of one of our great seats of learning, miscalled *national*, which are reserved for the exclusive benefit of the established church, must obviously have many prejudices to encounter and remove before he can obtain admittance on a footing of equality and intimacy among those who, having enjoyed privileges from which others are debarred, are often disposed, for that very reason, to look down on the scholarship which has not been acquired among themselves.

From Cambridge he removed to Newbury, in Berkshire, where he seems to have been very eligibly situated with an attached and encouraging congregation. During his residence here, he distinguished himself by various publications on the controversy between the church and the dissenters. His first appearance on this arena

was in reply to a Dr. Wells, a clergyman in Leicestershire, who had published "A Letter to Mr. Donley," a dissenting minister, containing many unfounded statements and gross misrepresentations of the principles and character of the dissenters. This pamphlet being circulated with great activity, Mr. Peirce, in 1707, published "Eight Letters to Dr. Wells," in which he convicted him, not only of various mistakes, but of gross and unjust calumnies. But his most remarkable and valuable work, in connexion with this controversy, was occasioned by the appearance of a Latin treatise by Dr. Nichols, Foreign Secretary to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and more particularly submitted to the judgment of divines in the foreign Protestant churches. As this work, from the quarter in which it originated, and the authority it appeared to assert, was likely to have an injurious effect in diffusing erroneous impressions of the character, doctrines, and discipline of the English dissenters among their foreign brethren, it was thought most desirable that a complete and full reply should be given by some one who was competent to appear to advantage in the same field. With this view Mr. Peirce, as the most suitable man for the task, was earnestly solicited to undertake it; and, after some hesitation, he consented, and prepared a well-written volume, entitled "*Vindiciæ Fratrum Dissidentium in Angliâ, adversus V. C. Gulielmi Nicholsii, S. T. P., Defensionem Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ,*" 1710. To this work Dr. Nichols attempted no reply, and Mr. Peirce thought the controversy at an end, till, some years afterwards, another clergyman, after

the death of Dr. Nichols, published an English translation of his treatise, with a preface, recommending it to the particular attention of the dissenters, as a complete and unanswerable refutation of their principles, without a hint at any reply to it having ever appeared.

It is possible enough that this proceeding arose not so much from any wilful unfairness as from pure ignorance ; for the "*Vindiciæ*" having been chiefly intended for foreign readers, may probably have had only a limited circulation at home ; and persons of all parties are too apt, in most cases, to content themselves with the writers on their own side of the question. Independently of other more unworthy motives, self-love and indolence often lead to this one-sided study of an important subject. It is much easier to confine ourselves to those arguments which we are already disposed to think conclusive, and to go along with the stream, than to undertake the labour of examination and patient inquiry ; not to add, that it is much more agreeable to find or believe ourselves in the right, than to be forced to acknowledge that we had been in the wrong. It is not much to be wondered at, therefore, that so few, comparatively speaking, run the risk of becoming exposed to this painful necessity. It is not at all unlikely that this clergyman was one of those who "never read dissenting divinity," and therefore had no suspicion that the book which he held forth as conclusive had already been fully answered. Mr. Peirce, finding that this work was much recommended to English readers, yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and published, in 1717, a translation of his for-

mer work, entitled "A Vindication of the Dissenters, in answer to Dr. W. Nichols's Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England: in three parts." The first part contains the history of Non-conformity; the second treats of the doctrine of the Church of England; and the third contains all the heads relating to discipline and worship. The work is dedicated to the ministers of the Church of Scotland, which he seems to hold up as a model of purity, both in doctrine and discipline; and, in fact, he takes little notice of the main point, which would now be considered as lying at the root of the question between the opponents and the advocates of an establishment *as such*; namely, the claim of the church to decree rites and ceremonies, and to exercise authority in matters of faith. This is the more remarkable, when we observe the effect of the treatment he afterwards received, to open his eyes to the injustice of all attempts to impose creeds of human composition; a leading principle of religious liberty, with which the name of Peirce has since become intimately connected in the history of Protestant dissent. In some places he even makes it an objection to Dr. N., that he represents his church as having departed from the standards of Calvinistic orthodoxy.

Nevertheless, even during his residence at Newbury, it would seem, from Mr. Peirce's own account, that in respect of the doctrine of the Trinity, he had himself already deviated considerably from these standards. He had been brought up, he tells us, in a scheme which he was unable afterwards to distinguish from Sabelianism, and a set of unscriptural expressions had

been inculcated on him from his youth, which he had long a great veneration for, and which continued to influence him so much as to inspire him with a strong disinclination to examine more particularly into this subject, even when he began to suspect a deficiency of argument in its favour from Scripture. In his preaching, however, he tells us, that he was at all times careful to confine himself as much as possible to scriptural forms of expression. The doctrine itself he was accustomed to consider as a mystery, which it was to little purpose to search into. Still he was surprised to observe, that the early fathers, previous to the council of Nice, never came up to the notions which have since become prevalent; and, on the other hand, that the expressions used by those who have had the highest reputation for orthodoxy appeared to him downright tritheism.

The effect of these things on his mind for some time, was to produce a repugnance to the subject altogether; and he never voluntarily turned his thoughts to it. He was in this state of mind when the outcry began to be raised about his former friend Mr. Whiston, on account of his having embraced Arian sentiments. He wrote him a friendly expostulation* on the subject, in

* Mr. Whiston has inserted the letter here referred to, in his own memoirs; and it must be confessed that it contains some strong expressions which may be thought to indicate a much nearer approach to high Trinitarian sentiments than the report given by the author himself of his views at this period, from which the preceding statement has been derived, would lead us to expect. But it must be remembered, that in the one case he was naturally desirous to make the *most*, in the other the *least*, of such orthodoxy as he then possessed. Nor let it be supposed that this apparent discrepancy implies any wilful insincerity in either case. It is by no means an easy matter for a man to give a pre-

answer to which Mr. Whiston referred him to Novatian, whose opinions certainly savour strongly of Arianism, as most nearly agreeing with his views. It was not, however, till some time after the publication of Dr. Clarke's celebrated treatise on the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, that Mr. Peirce applied himself in earnest to the further study of this subject. "They who most dislike the Doctor's notion, must own the method he took to treat of the subject was the best that could be thought of. I confess, (says Mr. Peirce,) I was charmed with it; and cannot but wonder that writers on the other side have not attempted to vindicate their notion the same way. I soon saw the controversy was too hard for me, and that I was eased of a design that would have put me to abundance of trouble. I could not fall in with the Doctor in every thing; but saw clearly that I must part with some beloved opinions, or else quit my notions of the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

The reader will easily imagine that this must

cise and accurate account, after the lapse of years, of the opinions he formerly entertained on any controverted question; especially when his views with respect to it have been undergoing a gradual, and sometimes, perhaps even to himself, an imperceptible, change. Still more is this likely to be the case when the question is one which is disputed with heat and vehemence, and excites the passions of contending parties. Those who are conscious of a tendency towards unpopular opinions, if they are timid and irresolute, will be apt to avoid as much as possible all reference to it; when obliged to advert to it, they will labour to be 'as orthodox as they can,' and will shelter themselves in obscure and ambiguous forms of expression. Thus they are often prevented from perceiving how far they have deviated from received standards, till some accidental circumstance suddenly reveals to them the important but hitherto unsuspected transition which they have undergone.

have been a terrible shock to me, and that I must have had a great concern upon my mind, when I found myself at a loss about a doctrine of which I had been all along fond, to a great degree of uncharitableness. However, this caused me to read the Bible with more care, and make it more my prayer to God that I might be led into the truth. I was soon convinced the common opinion could not reasonably be esteemed a fundamental article of the Christian faith, as I had been too apt before to take it to be; and on serious consideration, the subject appeared to me so abstruse and difficult, that I could not imagine God had made men's salvation to depend on their maintaining exactly the same notion concerning it; especially seeing the scripture never insists on the absolute necessity of one uniform belief about it; and I was much confirmed in this apprehension, by considering how widely good men had differed from one another on the subject.

“ While I continued in suspense, being still upon the search, I considered how I ought to order my practice: and here I thought it most safe for me to keep close to the scripture, which is much clearer in delivering rules and examples for our practice than in furnishing us with nice and intricate speculations. As to the Christian virtues, I thought them not much concerned in the controversy; and in conversation I had always avoided such intricate points, and might easily do so still. But my chief concern was about my preaching and praying. Concerning the former, I resolved to keep more close to the scripture expression than ever, and venture to say very little in my own words of a matter about which I was in so much doubt

myself. As to the latter, I could not find there was any occasion for my making much alteration, whichever notion should appear to be the truth; having always accustomed myself, as all Christians for the most part do, to pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. In this, therefore, I resolved to go on. The only doubt I had, was about the expediency and agreeableness of the doxology, I often used at the end of my prayers. I could not say it was unlawful; but I thought the safest way was to consider what sort of doxologies the scriptures set before us, and so recommend to our use. These, I was sure, must be safe, and the other might be doubtful. And it seemed to me very reasonable, that he that prays with others should make the worship as unexceptionable as possible to all Christians, by avoiding to bring into it disputable, doubtful, or unnecessary things. For this reason I left off the doxologies I had been wont to use."*

From this extract, it appears, that in the year 1713, when Mr. Peirce was invited to remove to Exeter, he was fully convinced that the common doctrine of the Trinity was unauthorized by scripture, and had for some time been accustomed to address all his devotions exclusively to the Father. There were at that time three dissenting congregations at Exeter, assembling in different places of worship, but so far united that they were served in common by four ministers, who exercised a collegiate charge over the whole. A committee of thirteen was entrusted with the general management of their congregational affairs, the con-

* Western Inquisition, p. 8.

tributions of the whole body being thrown into a common stock, and divided equally.* The united body was numerous and highly respectable, forming a large proportion of the most substantial citizens of the place. Mr. Peirce's invitation appears to have been not only unanimous, but pressed with a more than ordinary urgency and earnestness, to such a degree, that Dr. Calamy, who happened to visit the city at the time when the matter was pending, describes himself as filled with a kind of misgiving, that such excessive solicitude might pass to the other extreme, and expectations raised so extravagantly high might end in disappointment. "Never before," says he, "did I see such an earnestness in any people for a minister's coming among them. They talked as if they were quite undone if he did not accept their call, and no one else could signify any thing to them, if they had not him. They ran to such a height, that I took the freedom to tell some of them, that I was afraid they were under a sore temptation; and that their carriage would provoke God some way or other, to cross their too raised expectations, either by suffering something to befall Mr. Peirce, that should keep him from coming among them; or by blasting his pains among them, if their desires were gratified by his settling with them. This was remembered by several of them afterwards with some concern, when there were such heats among them about doctrinal matters. By me, I am sure it can never be forgotten. I told Mr. Peirce himself of it, with no small trouble, when I saw him after-

* Murch's 'Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England,' 387.

wards; and could not help thinking that the peculiar eagerness and impetuosity of their spirits on this occasion boded very ill."*

At this period, if we are to believe the representations afterwards brought forward by his opponents, the "*new notions*," as they called them, were altogether unknown at Exeter; but this is denied by Mr. Peirce. The writings of Clarke, Whiston, and others, who differ from the common opinion, had been read there before his coming among them; and some few of the people, though they kept it to themselves, had long before, by only reading their Bibles, been convinced that it was not agreeable to the scripture. Still there can be no doubt that a large majority of the society were, and continued to be, strictly Trinitarian; and this being the case, the question arises, how far it was or was not the duty of a man in Mr. Peirce's circumstances, aware that his private sentiments on a point which they thought, whether reasonably or not, to be of primary and essential importance, were materially different from those of the bulk of his congregation, to have explained his views in the first instance openly and without reserve. Something might perhaps be said on both sides. A Whiston or a Priestley would probably have not hesitated to lay their whole mind open, regardless of consequences; while others, feeling, or endeavouring to persuade themselves, that the points in dispute were of little interest or comparative importance, did their best to compromise such debatable questions, and veil their real opinions in general and somewhat vague lan-

* Calamy's *Life and Times*, vol. ii., p. 263.

guage, while they bestowed their chief attention on those doctrines which admitted of a more immediate devotional or practical application, and were therefore more available for the improvement of their hearers in the essential graces of the Christian character.

It is needless to observe, that this politic system, though adopted in many instances from pure and praiseworthy motives, is, to say the least of it, a doubtful and dangerous one. It is liable to involve those who practise it in a course of habitual dissimulation, which cannot be vindicated by its alleged motives, and can scarcely fail materially to injure the genuine integrity, simplicity, and godly sincerity, which the true Christian, and above all the Christian minister, will endeavour to cultivate with all assiduity and diligence. As far as Mr. Peirce's case is concerned, it is however worthy of remark, that if his preaching and public services were really conducted from the first on the plan which he describes, his *ultra*-orthodox hearers must have been much less alert and vigilant than such persons generally are, not instantly to detect his deficiencies, not so much in the actual assertion or introduction of obnoxious principles, as in the *absence* of topics and modes of address which a person thoroughly "sound in the faith" may be expected to employ on all occasions. It may be added, also, that of the other ministers, Mr. Hallet, if not Mr. Withers, appear in a great measure to have adopted the same views, and to have acted on the same principle.

In 1715, a vacancy occurring among the associated ministers was supplied by a Mr. Lavington, a young man of no great talent, but abundant or-

thodoxy, and more zeal than discretion. Most men in such a situation, associated with three colleagues, all of them greatly his superiors in years, in learning, in character, and reputation, would have been contented to remain quietly in the background. Mr. Lavington soon shewed that this was far from being his intention; the less so, as he was intimately connected with some ministers of the neighbourhood, narrow-minded and bigoted men, who encouraged him to thwart and oppose his colleagues, and availed themselves to the full extent of the opportunity which these troubles afforded them to exercise an inquisitorial influence in the concerns of other religious societies. In the general meeting of ministers called the "Assembly," which was held twice a year, in May and September, the old forms of Presbyterian Church government were at that time retained to a greater extent in Devonshire than in any other part of the country; and though they were not in themselves connected with any considerable ecclesiastical power, at least not in ordinary times, yet at a period of popular excitement or alarm, when disputes like those which at this time prevailed at Exeter increased the violence of party-spirit and sectarian animosity, they afforded facilities for the display of an illiberal bigotry, which, though it was happily disarmed of its more formidable attributes, had still power to light up the flames of civil discord, to set a man at variance against his brother, and to drive its victims from honourable stations which they had filled with credit and usefulness.

Mr. Peirce himself, however, had rather high notions of church authority; and in his estimation

Presbyterianism was by no means such a mere name as it has since become universally among us, and as it was among the greater part of the class of dissenters, so called, even in his own time. In a sermon under the title, "Presbyterian Ordination proved regular," he argues strongly against the Independents; maintaining that to the end of the world, presbyters, and not the people, are to judge of men's qualifications for the sacred office. "The congregation are invited to unite in prayers for a blessing on his person and labours, who is now to be set apart to minister in the church of Christ. This (he adds) is *your* act as well as ours. But the authoritative separating and commissioning him to the work is *not* your act, but primarily the Lord's, and secondarily *our* acting in his name." If we are to rely on the account given by Mr. Fox, of Plymouth, in his curious and biographical papers,* Mr. Peirce was not indisposed, as long as his popularity continued, to carry matters with a high hand in the assembly; and he even insinuates that, if his falling into the Unitarian scheme had not convinced him that he should at one time or another stand in great need of the charity of his fellow-christians, he would have shewn but little to such as should happen to differ from him. The tone of some passages in the tracts he published in the controversy which ensued on this occasion, is certainly such as to shew that he had a sufficient feeling of his own importance, and was fully sensible of his superiority to the men who were enabled by circumstances to annoy and overcome

* See Monthly Repository, O.S., vol. xvi.

him. It must on the other hand be observed, that no one can read Mr. Fox's papers without immediately perceiving the prevailing bias of his mind to satire, so that his accounts of his contemporaries, where they tend to their disparagement, must be taken with some few grains of allowance.

The first serious indication of an approaching storm occurred in 1717; when a Mr. H. Atkins, a zealot for orthodoxy, preached in Mr. Peirce's absence a vehement sermon, charging some of the dissenters of Exeter with "damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them." Mr. Peirce, on his return, found that a great ferment had been excited, and, at the request of some leading members of his congregation, preached a sermon on the propitiation of Christ. The doctrine of this sermon, from which he has given a long extract in his pamphlet, entitled, "The Western Inquisition," seems to bear a considerable resemblance to what is sometimes called *moderate Calvinism*. The efficacy of the death and sacrifice of Christ is owing to the appointment of God, to the dignity of his person, and the holiness and purity of his oblation. We could have no certainty of this efficacy, if we did not know assuredly that it was the appointment of God; but, on the other hand, this alone, though we had been made acquainted with nothing more on the subject, would have been sufficient to satisfy us that all was right, and that a way had been made to reconcile the remission of sin with the divine justice, though we could not see it. Still he repels the notion, which he ascribes to the Socinians, that God might have been reconciled to us without a satisfaction. Justice to the sinner may

have admitted it; but there was also a justice due to himself—a regard to his own honour and glory, and the reputation of his government. On the other hand, he rejects the notion that an infinite satisfaction was necessary, because sin is an infinite evil as committed against an infinite Being;—he justly observes, that by the same rule any act of obedience would be an infinite good. In the sufferings endured by Christ on account of our sins, God is shewn to be righteous and *sin-revenging*; and having thus secured his own *honour*, and been just to himself, he may, without the least impeachment of his wisdom, holiness, or sovereignty, be the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Another thing to which the virtue and efficacy of Christ's propitiation is owing, is the dignity of his person. "Through the *eternal Spirit* he offered himself to God." This expression, according to Mr. Peirce, relates to the divine nature, the Logos, united to the human nature of Christ, which was the thing that gave such a mighty efficacy and virtue to his propitiation. This being the case, we should be on our guard not to depreciate him in our thoughts or our expressions. He then finds great fault with the forced and awkward interpretations, as he calls them, of the Socinians; and adds, that we need not be shy in giving to Christ the title which we find the scripture gives him *over and over*; (citing to this purpose, John i. 1, 2; Heb. i. 8; Isaiah ix. 6.) As to the difficulty of reconciling this with the unity of God, he observes that, whatever the difficulty may seem to be, since the Son is begotten of the Father, and derives all his perfections from him, it cannot be

unreasonable to resolve the unity of the Godhead into the same principle that the scripture does, and to represent the Father as the fountain of the Godhead in the Logos, who is his only begotten Son.*

It must be admitted, that it is necessary to enlarge our definition of Unitarianism to the very utmost, in order to comprehend such doctrine as this within its pale. We may, without impropriety, consider all who confine their religious worship to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," as deserving the title of Unitarian; and this Mr. Peirce appears to have done; though, perhaps, some may be at a loss to perceive with what consistency he did so, after the concessions he made on this and other occasions. At all events, it would appear that for a time this sermon produced apparently the desired effect of allaying the jealousy which had arisen. There can, however, be no doubt, that whatever the ministers may have done who disclaimed any discussion of this sort in private, and professed their uniform endeavour to discourage all topics of controversy and dissension, the subject was much agitated by various members of the society, displaying probably on both sides more zeal and warmth than sound judgment. In this way much bickering and dispute doubtless arose, and many idle tales were circulated, which, instead of being suppressed, were encouraged and promoted by the orthodox minister, Lavington. Soon afterwards, he avowed his resolution to bring the whole affair before the Assembly. But in the

* Western Inquisition, pp. 15—25.

mean time it was taken up by the "committee of thirteen,"—a self-elected body entrusted with the temporal concerns of the society, but who did not scruple to interfere occasionally in matters beyond their province. Urged by the representations of these gentlemen, Mr. Peirce consented to preach on the eternity of the Son of God. On this occasion, after dwelling for some time on what appears to us a somewhat fanciful argument, derived from Hebrews ix. 14, where he must needs have it that the "eternal Spirit" means the divine nature of Christ, he introduces the following just and impressive view of the great principles of religious liberty with reference to the existing disputes; and which were certainly not less infringed by committees of thirteen, and by assemblies of ministers imposing their own creeds as a test upon others, binding men's consciences and lording it over their brethren, than by synods and councils backed with the authority of the civil power.

"There is one thing which I cannot but think it just for men to insist on,—that, as the holy scriptures are the only rule in such matters, so men should not pretend to impose their notions upon others. 'Tis perhaps impossible to talk of these things, without sometimes using other than the express words of scripture; but then let us not impose such our expressions or our interpretations upon others. This liberty let others tamely give up as they please; I do and will insist on it for myself, as a reasonable creature, a Christian, a Protestant, and a Dissenter. As I pretend not to impose on others, so neither will I in this case be imposed on by

others. No king, no parliament, no church, no council, no synod, no minister or body of ministers, no man or body of men, shall be acknowledged by me to have any such power or rightful authority over me. They may deprive me of my civil liberty, of my estate, or of my life; but this liberty, by the grace of God, they never shall deprive me of, to think and speak of the matters of God and of religion only in that manner in which I apprehend they are spoken of in the holy scriptures by God himself. Tell me not what Athanasius or Arius, what the council of Nice or Rimini, have said, but what Christ, and Peter and Paul and James and John and Jude have said. I call no man master upon earth.”*

At length, the Assembly met in September 1718. On the preceding day a preparatory meeting was held to arrange their future proceedings. It was urged that the growth of Arianism rendered it necessary that they should purge themselves, and clear their reputation in the world. Some one expressed his surprise that the Exeter ministers were so backward. Mr. Peirce replied that he could not speak without some concern, seeing he apprehended that they were about to sap the foundation he stood upon, as a christian, a protestant, and a dissenter; and in the course of his speech, he called for a text in which the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were called the one God. The orthodox party only answered by dwelling upon consequences. At this meeting, Mr. Withers delivered an able and elaborate speech against the course proposed; arguing

* Western Inquisition, p. 60.

strongly both against tests in general, and against this in particular. On the following morning, after much and violent dispute, it was determined to call on each member to declare his belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, a proposition of Mr. Peirce, that a declaration expressed in the words of scripture should be admitted as sufficient, having been negatived. Mr. Hallet, however, who was first called on, expressed himself as follows: "I declare that the Father is the most high God. Luke i. 32; vi. 35. I also declare that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, John i. 1. That Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5. I further declare, that when Ananias and Sapphira did lie unto the Holy Ghost, they did not lie unto men, but unto God. And the bodies of believers being the temples of the Holy Ghost, (1 Cor. vi. 19,) are the temples of God, (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17,) and yet, 'to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things,' 1 Cor. viii. 6." Mr. Peirce gave his creed in the following terms; "I am not of the opinion of Sabellius, Arius, Socinus, or Sherlock. I believe there is but one God, and can be no more. I believe the Son and Holy Ghost to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father; and the unity of God I think is to be resolved into the Father's being the fountain of the divinity of the Son and Spirit." Three others, when called on, denied the authority of the meeting to require of them an account of their faith, and positively refused to make any declaration; and Mr. Peirce, in the account he has left of these proceedings, expresses his regret that he had not

done the same. At length it was formally resolved, on the motion of Mr. Lavington, "that it is the general sense of this assembly, that there is but one living and true God, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are that one God." During the discussion, the wildest extravagances of Tritheism were defended; and one of the high party, when the absurdity of his creed was urged upon him, replied, "I leave God to reconcile his own contradictions."

When this business was over, Mr. Matthew Huddy, one of the three recusants, who happened to be the preacher of the day, delivered an admirable sermon, earnestly contending for the right of private judgment, recommending the use of reason in matters of religion, and condemning the spirit of intolerance which had been excited so banefully and so extensively.*

No immediate steps were taken, either by the Assembly or by others, in consequence of these declarations; but in about two months, Mr. Peirce and his two colleagues were waited on by "the thirteen," with a requisition to profess their assent to the doctrine of the Trinity, either in the words of the first article of the Church of England, or of the sixth answer in the Assembly's Catechism, or as their own assembly had recently agreed. Mr. Peirce promptly refused; telling them, at the same time, that he could not satisfy his conscience to lay down his ministry himself; but if they would venture to lay him aside, and that would make them easy, he would give them no further trouble. On this, the managers, hesitating

* Monthly Repository, O. S., xii. 582.

to proceed to this extremity on their own authority, made application for advice to certain ministers in London. It is not much to the credit of these ministers, that, without making any further inquiries, or consulting the parties against whom the complaint was made, they proceeded immediately to give an opinion upon an *ex-parte* statement. Their advice was to call in some of the neighbouring ministers who might best judge of these matters on the spot. Accordingly, seven ministers were applied to, who may have been selected, as residing at no great distance, but who happen, nevertheless, to have been among those who took the most prominent part in the late violent proceedings in the Assembly, and who were, therefore, least of all likely to exercise an impartial judgment on the case. In fact, it does not appear to have been for the purpose of judging between the parties, or of reconciling differences, that they were assembled ; but to assist one of the parties in the most effectual mode of accomplishing the object they were already determined on.

These seven, as was, in fact, expected and intended, set their names to a declaration to the following effect ; “that there are some errors in doctrine that are a sufficient foundation for the people to withdraw from the communion of their ministers holding such errors ; and that the denying the true and proper divinity of the Son of God, namely, that he is one God with the Father, is an error of that nature, contrary to the holy scripture, and to the doctrine of the reformed churches.” Shortly afterwards, the four ministers were requested to meet these gentlemen, when the above declaration was read to them, and they

were severally asked, whether they owned that the Son of God was one God with the Father. "I told them," says Mr. Peirce, as to their article, "I would own that Christ and his Father were one, because he said so. They asked, if I would own that they were one God? I said, if they would turn me to a text where 'twas said so, I would own it; but I had over and over again declared, that I would subscribe no religious tests at all that were not expressed in scripture words." Mr. Hallet in like manner refused his assent. Mr. Lavington of course gave it without reserve. Mr. Withers offered them this explication in the words of Bishop Pearson: though the Father and the Son are two distinct persons, yet since the Son is of and from the Father as the fountain of deity, and intimately united with him, I conceive in this sense he may be said to be one God with the Father." But this was not accepted. After some further deliberation, they received a message from the gentlemen to this effect: "If the ministers have nothing more to say to us, we have nothing to say to them."*

The next day, without the formality of any regular appeal to the congregation at large, three of the four trustees took possession of the keys of the meeting-house in which Mr. Peirce and Mr. Hallet were accustomed chiefly to officiate; and a meeting of the body of trustees (or proprietors as they style themselves) of the three chapels passed a resolution, declaring that neither of these gentlemen should henceforth preach in any of them. This was a strong measure, outstepping

* Case of the Ministers ejected at Exon, p. 12.

the bounds of their legitimate authority, and was reasonably objected to as arbitrary and unfair. There is, however, good reason to believe that both parties were sufficiently aware that it was approved in substance, if not in form, by the majority of the people. If it had been otherwise, the one party were as little likely to have submitted to it as the other to have adopted it. At all events, there is no reason to believe that the trustees were ever called to account for their conduct by their own friends, or even found it necessary, in modern phrase, to sue for a bill of indemnity from those who were glad that the thing was done, though they might not altogether approve of the manner of doing it.

Of the three suspected ministers, Peirce and Hallet only were ultimately ejected; for Mr. Withers, notwithstanding the firmness and decision with which he had remonstrated against the first inquisitorial proceedings, and refused to assent to any creed imposed by human authority, was at length induced to sign the prescribed formula of the first article of the Church of England; thus subscribing slave to his imperious and bigoted junior, with whom he was consequently permitted to remain associated, and to whom, notwithstanding the unquestioned superiority of his talents and character, we cannot doubt that he was an humble subordinate for the rest of his life. "May that good man's yoke," says Mr. Peirce (W. I. p. 160) "always sit easy upon him. I cannot yet repent that I did not submit to the same."

The ejected ministers and their adherents with some difficulty procured a temporary place of meeting; and soon afterwards erected a place of

worship for themselves, in which, for nearly a century, a succession of eminent men officiated to a respectable congregation. It is remarkable as being the first in this country avowedly erected for the worship of the one God, the Father; although there can be no doubt that the worship of many dissenting societies had for some time been conducted on an anti-trinitarian plan; and, in the liberal constitution of the trust-deeds of the greater part of the Presbyterian chapels which had been erected subsequent to the Act of Toleration, their founders afforded (and would seem to have intended to afford) to those who came after them the liberty of judging for themselves, and of varying their modes of worship and preaching according to what they might at any future period conceive to be most conformable to reason and scripture. The orthodox majority, of course, retained possession of the original meeting-houses, and speedily nominated successors to the ejected ministers, one of whom (Mr. Enty, from Plymouth) was among the most active and zealous abettors of the recent illiberal proceedings. They continued, as before, to act in concert on all important occasions; but had no communication with their heretical brethren who had gone out from them. It is, however, a curious example of the silent and unmarked progress of truth, that that generation had not passed away when the Assembly virtually reversed the decree of 1718. It being proposed to the Assembly which met in May 1753, whether any candidates should be recommended who refuse to declare their faith in the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,—it was debated whether the question should be put, and by the

majority carried in the negative. By that time, the celebrated Micaiah Towgood, who then occupied the pulpit from which Mr. Peirce had been ejected, was at least as far from orthodoxy as his predecessor had been; and now, under the successive ministries of Towgood, Manning, Bretland, Kenrick, and Carpenter, the descendants of those who excommunicated Mr. Peirce and his adherents have been long since brought to adopt a form of Unitarianism, from which the most heretical of those times would have started back with affright. In 1810, the two congregations, finding that there was no longer any material difference in their views on disputed points, again united.

The Exeter controversy, in consequence of the appeal made by both parties to certain ministers in London, was the means of bringing on a very vehement struggle on the general question, which was debated at great length in a multitude of publications, some very able, others displaying a degree of bitterness and party spirit which it is mortifying to observe in the avowed ministers of the gospel of peace. This dispute created a breach between the contending parties which was never entirely healed; and there can be little doubt that it tended materially to weaken the political weight and influence of the Nonconformists of that day, taken as a body. But, on the other hand, it is not less evident that, in the midst of the din of contending factions, the voice of truth was heard by many. The general attention was forcibly directed to important principles, some of them hitherto unsuspected, and others, though tacitly acknowledged, yet never before pursued to their practical consequences; so that what the friends

of peace deeply deplored at the time, became, in the hands of Providence, the instrument of important and extensive good. The parties who had been severally applied to from Exeter, when it was determined on to lay the question before the general body of ministers in London, were each bent on carrying the matter in their own way, and made great exertions to collect together as strong a body of supporters as they could. The friends of Mr. Peirce came prepared with a series of propositions entitled "Advices for Peace;" of which the fourth, and most important, is as follows: "If, after all, a public hearing be insisted on, we think that the Protestant principle, that the Bible is the only and the perfect rule of faith, obliges those who have the case before them not to condemn any man on the authority of human decisions, or because he consents not to human forms and phrases: but then only is he to be censured as not holding the faith necessary to salvation, when it appears that he contradicts, or refuses to own, the plain and express declarations of holy scripture in what is there made necessary to be believed, and in matters there solely revealed. And we trust that all will treat the subjects of their common Lord, as they who expect the final decision at his appearing." The promoters of these "Advices," though deprecating any reference to human creeds, disclaim the imputation that they are themselves favourable to any other than the commonly-received notions on the subject of the Trinity; and this was probably true to a certain extent; though we perceive, in the list of signatures attached to them, the names of some who then were, and of others who afterwards became,

distinguished supporters of different forms of Unitarianism. On the other hand, a powerful body was favourable to the orthodox party at Exeter, and could not be contented without an express declaration of their faith. They insisted accordingly on a confession in terms of the first article of the Church of England, and drew up a counter string of advices, with which in their apparent spirit and general tenor there is no material fault to be found. The course which they recommend in case of a disagreement, real or supposed, between a minister and either the whole or any considerable part of his congregation, is rational and proper enough; but it is obviously spoiled in its application to this particular instance, by the prescribed declaration of conformity to a creed of human composition by which it is introduced.

The general meeting, at which this important question was discussed and put to the vote, was held at Salters' Hall, from which circumstance the whole dispute has received the name of the Salters' Hall Controversy. At the final decision, the Bible (as Sir J. Jekyl wittily expressed it) carried it by 4; the numbers being 57 to 53.

Dr. Calamy (in his *Memoirs* lately published*), at the conclusion of his account of this dispute, in which he refused to take any part, though earnestly solicited on both sides, has the following very just remarks: "As to the grand matter which they contended about, I was entirely of the mind of the celebrated Mr. Chillingworth, who closes his preface to 'The Religion of Protestants a safe Way to Salvation' with these memorable

* Calamy's *Life and Times*, ii. 417.

words: 'Let all men believe the scripture, and that only, and endeavour to believe it in the true sense, and require no more of others; and they shall find this not only a better, but the only way to suppress heresy and restore unity. For he that believes the scripture sincerely, and endeavours to believe it in the true sense, cannot possibly be a heretic. And if no more than this were required of any man to make him capable of the Church's communion, then all men so qualified, though they were different in opinion, yet, notwithstanding any such difference, must be of necessity of one communion.'"

These sentiments are very just; but surely, if they were Dr. Calamy's, he ought, in proper consistency, to have recorded his vote with the non-subscribing majority.

Such was the issue of this contest, of which we have given a more minute recital than such disputes commonly deserve, considering it as a critical incident in the progress of liberal opinions and views among a large class of the Nonconformists of that period. The eager struggle and bitter debates which it occasioned, gave rise to much irritation, animosity, and ill-will, which, it must be confessed, was far from being limited to one party in the dispute; but the very agitation which it gave to men's minds served to shake the foundations and weaken the dominion of prejudice; to stimulate to more free and active inquiry; and, in more instances than one, to carry the inquirers forward to conclusions which in the outset they little anticipated, and even formally disclaimed. On the merits of the case itself the following remarks of Mr. Murch are not unde-

serving of attention: "A calm review of the whole case suggests various apologies for the part which was acted by the Trinitarians. They attached incalculable value to their opinions, and saw that those opinions were in danger of being subverted by the influence of the ministers whom they invited, and long considered orthodox. They also saw that the places of worship which they had built at considerable expense were gradually becoming subservient to the dissemination of views which many called blasphemous and fatal. Moreover, their fears were increased by the well known fact, that what they deemed heresy was not openly inculcated; but that some friends of Peirce and Hallet carried on a secret mode of proselytizing, which appeared likely to be more hurtful to their cause than open warfare. And if on one side it be asserted that Mr. Lavington and his party were guilty of deceitful transactions, it cannot be denied on the other that the heterodox occasionally concealed their opinions on important topics, and endeavoured to give them a popular colouring. That the heterodox ministers wished for peace is very evident; but it is a question whether, in pursuing what they believed to be a Christian object, they did not sometimes resort to unworthy compromises. These considerations are perfectly compatible with a full appreciation of the difficulties in which they were placed, with high admiration of many parts of their conduct, and with firm persuasion that the cause of religious truth and religious liberty is deeply indebted to them. In the first place, they dared to inquire and decide for themselves, when it was the universal custom to be guided implicitly,

by established formularies; and they subsequently maintained their convictions, and advocated the great principle of the sufficiency of scripture, amidst the clamours of ignorance, prejudice, and bigotry, at the risk of losing friends, reputation, means of subsistence,—all, indeed, that most men value!”*

The minority which retired with Mr. Peirce and his colleague were, however, by no means contemptible in numbers, and still less so in respectability and intelligence; consisting, as might be expected, in a great measure of that class who, from their education and circumstances, were both more able to inquire and examine, and more likely to avow their conclusions in a spirit of independence. Some of them, there is good reason to believe, were already disposed to pursue their inquiries into “new notions,” for which even their ministers were not prepared. At all events, it may be presumed, that Mr. Peirce now found himself much more at his ease than when associated with a jealous, narrow-minded colleague, envious of his reputation and superior abilities, and with a congregation to whom he dared not declare what he believed to be the whole counsel of God, for fear of an explosion. He had now no longer any thing to keep secret; no inducement to withhold any part of what he thought was scripture truth; no necessity for compromises and concealments, which are too apt to become a fatal snare to a man’s conscience. It may be supposed, therefore, that, when the storm had subsided, he would enjoy more comfort and tranquillity than before. This how-

* History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England, p. 398.

ever scarcely appears to have been the case. His mind had been deeply irritated and harassed by the treatment he had received; and he seems to have allowed the recollection of it to affect his equanimity more than could have been wished. His health also began to give way, and his connexion with the newly formed society did not continue more than about six years.

During this period, he published the work by which he is chiefly known to posterity as a theologian,—a Paraphrase on some of the Epistles of St. Paul, after the manner of Mr. Locke. He began with the Epistle to the Colossians, which having been received with great favour by the public, was speedily followed by the Epistle to the Philippians. His next attempt was on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which however he did not live to finish; the manuscript which he left prepared for the press extending only as far as ch. x. 34. It was afterwards completed by Mr. Hallet, junior, his colleague and successor. These are performances of great ability, and justly maintain a high reputation among biblical scholars. They profess to be a sequel, as far as they go, to the well-known works of Mr. Locke, and are formed for the most part on his plan; but the notes are considerably more elaborate and extended. In point of doctrine, as may be expected, they have a decided leaning in favour of the author's high Arian principles.

While he was engaged in this work, Mr. Peirce was attacked by a disorder which put a period to his life, March 10, 1726, in the fifty-third year of his age. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Leonard's, Exeter, and his friends were desirous of erecting a monument over his remains, with a

suitable Latin inscription, which they had prepared. They had no idea of the necessity of consulting the clergyman of the parish on the subject; but, when the work was nearly finished, this gentleman reminded them of his right to inspect and sanction every thing of that kind which was put up in his churchyard. When the intended inscription was submitted to him, he refused the necessary license. He was then requested to allow the following words to be inscribed on the tombstone, "Here lies the reverend, learned, and pious Mr. James Peirce." He replied, that Mr. Peirce could not properly be styled reverend, because he had not had episcopal ordination; nor pious, because he taught errors. All, therefore, that was finally placed on the stone was simply

Mr. James Peirce's Tomb,

1726.

HALLET.

THE name of *Hallet*, which frequently occurs in the preceding narrative, occupied a distinguished place for three generations in the history of Protestant dissent at Exeter. The first of the series was one of the venerable Two Thousand, ejected from Chesleborough, in Somersetshire. In 1672 he settled at Exeter, where he remained till his death in 1688, exercising his ministry as a faithful, affectionate pastor, under the dangers and trials to which Nonconformist ministers in those troubled times were continually exposed. He is said to have been a diligent student, and a fervent, clear, and impressive preacher. His immediate successor was Mr. G. Trosse, with whom his son, Joseph Hallet, jun., was associated as colleague in 1690. In 1710, this gentleman opened an academy for the education of candidates for the Christian ministry, which continued for several years. In the list of students at this institution we find the names of several who rose to eminence in the succeeding age;—among the rest, Joseph Hallet the third, and the celebrated Dr. James Foster. It seems to have been looked upon with great jealousy by the opponents of the new notions, as a hotbed of heresy; and the liberal manner, as we should consider it, in which Mr. Hallet appears to have permitted and even encouraged his pupils to study both sides of dis-

puted questions, is frequently mentioned in terms of strong censure in the pamphlets published by the ultra-orthodox in the Exeter controversy. It is by no means improbable that some of them both went further than their tutor in the adoption of heterodox sentiments, and were considerably less discreet in divulging them.

Mr. Hallet, after his ejection, continued joint pastor with Mr. Peirce of the seceding congregation, till his death in 1722, when he was succeeded by his son, already mentioned, the best known and most eminent of the three. He was born in 1692. For a short time he was associated with his father in the conduct of the academy in which he received his education, but not as a regular tutor. At this time he appears first to have corresponded with the celebrated Whiston; and it gives a singular image of the jealous and inquisitorial spirit with which the self-styled champions of orthodoxy were accustomed to keep watch on those whom they suspected of prying into forbidden mysteries, when we learn that Mr. Hallet thought it necessary to request his correspondent not to address his letter directly to himself, since, if it should be known that he maintained a correspondence with such a noted heresiarch, it would be utter ruin to his prospects. Mr. Joseph Hallet was the author of various pieces connected with the leading controversy of the day, so prolific in the productions of the busy pens of many active polemics; but he is best known by a valuable work entitled, "A free and impartial Study of the Scriptures recommended; being notes on some peculiar texts, with discourses and observations on various subjects."

The first volume of this work was published in 1729, and was followed by two others in 1732 and 1734. He also distinguished himself in the controversy which was actively maintained at that period by several eminent advocates of revelation, particularly among the Dissenters, with Morgan, Collins, Tindal, and other deistical writers. He has been already mentioned as having continued and completed the imperfect work of Mr. Peirce on the Epistle to the Hebrews. To this work he has prefixed an elaborate dissertation on the disputed questions as to the authorship of this Epistle, and the language in which it was written; adopting the conjecture that it was originally written by St. Paul, in the Hebrew or rather Syro-Chaldaic tongue, spoken by the Jews of Palestine, but that it was afterwards translated into Greek by St. Luke.

Mr. Hallet was a man of high accomplishment as a scholar, particularly in the Hebrew and other oriental tongues; and it has been remarked, that there is scarcely one of the conjectural emendations of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament which he has suggested in his discourses, that has not been since countenanced by respectable evidence in the extensive researches of Kennicott. As a minister, he is said to have discharged the duties of his office with exemplary diligence and fidelity; and in private life to have secured the esteem of all who knew him, by the mildness and gentleness of his temper, and his truly Christian behaviour. He died in 1744.

NATHANIEL LARDNER

Is one of the distinguished names in which the Unitarians, with good reason, are most accustomed to glory. He is, indeed, one of those worthies whom the universal church are wont to claim as their own; though too large a portion of them, in so doing, are obliged to sacrifice their consistency, and to lay aside for the occasion their usual narrow principles of exclusion. His accurate and extensive learning,—his thorough acquaintance with Christian antiquity,—his unwearied and patient industry,—the freedom from prejudice and partiality in stating his argument, which has obtained him the epithet of the “Candid Lardner,” were qualities in which he has seldom, if ever, been excelled: and he brought these endowments, more rare than brilliant, to the most valuable and important service in which they could be engaged, in placing the external or historical evidence of Christianity, in so far as it depends on the proof of the authenticity of the Christian scriptures, on a clearer and more satisfactory footing than it had ever before assumed.

Nathaniel Lardner was born at Hawkhurst, a considerable village in the county of Kent, June 6, 1684. His father, Mr. Richard Lardner, was a respectable minister, afterwards settled at Deal, in that county. Where he received the earlier

part of his education cannot now be ascertained ; but he was transferred at an early age to an academy in London, then conducted by Dr. Joshua Oldfield. Here, however, he seems to have remained but a short time ; for in 1699, when under sixteen, he was sent to pursue his theological studies at Utrecht ; in which university, then enjoying a high celebrity, many of the most distinguished English Nonconformist divines of that period received either the whole or a considerable part of their academical education.*

After spending more than three years at Utrecht, Mr. Lardner, removed to Leyden, where, however, he remained only about six months, and then returned to England. Where or in what manner the intervening years were spent, till 1709, does not appear ; but, from the learning and talents which he displayed in more mature age, it cannot be doubted that this period was employed in a diligent and conscientious preparation for the profession to which he was destined of a minister of religion. It was not till August 2, in that year, that he made his first appearance

* In his funeral sermon for Dr. Hunt, (x. 111,) our author speaks of five or six of the English students, one of whom was Hunt, and " perhaps another" the preacher himself, who in January, 1700, or thereabout, had the curiosity to attend the lectures of a celebrated Rabbi on Jewish learning. After a time, he adds, all except these two, disheartened by the difficulty of the study, gave out. If we are right in this conjecture as to the other student, it is a remarkable indication of proficiency and aptitude for study, that he should have been either prepared or disposed at so early an age to engage in a pursuit which had little to recommend it to the youthful student, except the persuasion that the knowledge thus acquired was, as he expresses it, ' a price put into the hand (Prov. xvii. 16) of one who knew how to make use of it.'

in the pulpit ; and for four years after this time nothing further is known of him, than that he was a member of the congregational church of which Mr. Matthew Clark, a man of some eminence among the Dissenters of that period, was minister. In 1713, he was invited to reside in the house of Lady Treby, widow of Sir George Treby, late Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, as domestic chaplain, and tutor to her youngest son. Though we have no account of the manner in which the preceding years were spent, yet our knowledge of what Mr. Lardner afterwards became forbids us to doubt that, at this period, he was abundantly qualified by his knowledge, judgment, and learning, for the duties he was now called on to fill. After superintending the studies of young Mr. Treby for three years, he accompanied him on an excursion to the Austrian Netherlands and the United Provinces. From a journal which Mr. Lardner kept of this tour, it was evident that he did not lose the opportunity which it afforded of making exact and judicious observations on the manners and customs of the inhabitants whom he saw and visited, and on the edifices and curiosities of the countries through which he passed.

He continued in the family of Lady Treby, in his capacity of chaplain, till the death of that lady, in 1721 ; by which event he was left without any regular engagement, and in circumstances of some uncertainty and suspense. " I am at a loss," says he, " how to dispose of myself. I can say that I am desirous of being useful in the world. Without this, no external advantages relating to myself will make me happy ; and yet

I have no prospect of being serviceable in the work of the ministry, having preached many years without being favoured with the approbation and choice of any one congregation." This may possibly be accounted for without any material disparagement either to the preacher or the congregations. Mr. Lardner was probably, even at that time, not possessed of a good elocution; and his sermons, if we may judge by those which he afterwards printed, though abounding with rich and valuable matter, were written in a dry and unattractive style, by no means well adapted to please the taste of a popular audience, however interesting they might be to a discerning few.

Two years after the death of Lady Treby, Mr. Lardner suffered another deep affliction in the death of her son, his friend and former pupil, Brindley Treby, Esq., of whom he speaks in the highest terms of affection and esteem, which are of themselves sufficient to assure us that he must have been worthy of the assiduous instruction of such a tutor. To the distress of his mind on this occasion he partly attributes the increase of an infirmity which had been growing upon him,—his deafness; which was now such, that, when sitting in the pulpit while the congregation were singing, he could hardly tell whether they were singing or not. This infirmity continued with him through life; and must have rendered his delivery far from pleasant, except to those who were in the constant habit of attendance upon him, and who had learnt to look beyond the deficiencies or peculiarities of manner, to the judicious sentiments, sound arguments, and impressive practical applications, which distinguish

most of his discourses. His intercourse with his private friends was carried on almost entirely in writing. Paper, pens, and ink, being brought in, the visitors wrote down their part of the conversation, to which he replied with great freedom and cheerfulness. These papers he was accustomed to preserve, and their perusal afterwards often led him to subjects of further consideration.

Some years before this time, Mr. Lardner had become a member of two literary societies, which met weekly at a coffee-house in the city. One consisted entirely of ministers, who devoted themselves to theological pursuits; the other was of a more miscellaneous character, for the reading of essays and debating of questions on various learned or entertaining subjects.

About the year 1723, he had been engaged, in conjunction with some other ministers, in a weekly evening lecture, at the Old Jewry, on subjects chiefly of a moral and practical nature; but also entering, in a somewhat more regular and systematic manner than is usual on such occasions, into the evidences of natural and revealed religion. The department of this course allotted to Mr. Lardner was the proof of the Credibility of the Gospel History, on which important subject he delivered three sermons which contained, as it were, the first outlines of the great work on which his fame chiefly rests, and may possibly have suggested it to the author's mind. The first part of this work was undertaken shortly afterwards, and was at length published, though after considerable hesitation and delay, in February, 1727, in two volumes, under the title of "The Credibility of the Gospel His-

tory ; or the Facts occasionally mentioned in the New Testament confirmed by passages of ancient authors who were contemporary with our Saviour or his Apostles, or lived near their time."

It is needless to say that this is a work of first-rate merit, and has acquired a reputation which can never fade. It was received at once by all parties, both churchmen and dissenters, who were competent to judge of its merits, with the applause which was justly its due ; and its reputation speedily extended to foreign countries. In this performance the author has rendered a most valuable service to the Christian world ; and, in particular, has placed within the reach of the theological student a fund of important information, of which no one who values sound learning, or is duly solicitous for his own suitable preparation for the work of the Lord, will neglect to avail himself. It placed him at once in the first rank of Christian scholars,—a rank from which he can never be displaced ; for all parties, not merely those who rejoice in counting him one of themselves, but those who differ most widely from his views of controverted doctrines, agree in awarding the meed of praise to the learned, the accurate, the candid Lardner.

In August, 1729, at the age of forty-five, Mr. Lardner obtained his first settlement as a stated preacher among the dissenters. Having had occasion to preach for Dr. W. Harris, at Crutched Friars, he was in consequence unexpectedly invited by the congregation to be assistant preacher to their minister. On the occasion of his assuming this office for the first time, he offered a prayer in his own behalf that he might be guided in and

strengthened for the work, which we insert as a sufficient indication, if any such should be needed, that Lardner, though chiefly known to the world as a learned theologian, was not one of those inconsistent men who have devoted themselves to these researches merely as an exercise of literature and scholarship, but that the great truths and doctrines of the gospel, whose evidences he so laboriously established, were duly prized, and had made their suitable impression on his heart. He was not a man (as some have not been slow to insinuate) who busied himself in defending the outworks, while the treasures laid up in the citadel were overlooked or disregarded. "And, we beseech thee, do thou graciously assist thine unworthy servant, whom by thy providence thou hast also called to serve in this place. Grant that he may take great heed to himself and his doctrine, that he may save himself and them that hear him. Do thou enlighten him more and more in the knowledge of the truth, and grant that he may be faithful to thee, and speak the word with all boldness, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God so far as he is acquainted therewith. And may the hearts of thy people be opened to receive the truth with all readiness; may they carefully and impartially examine the things which they hear, and embrace what is agreeable to thy will. O Lord, our hope is in thee! do thou strengthen us, and make us sufficient for what thou callest us to. Let thy strength be made perfect in our weakness; cause thy face to shine upon us; let us see thy power and thy glory in the sanctuary. May some who are yet in darkness and ignorance be here enlightened;

may some be converted ; and may thy people be comforted, and continually edified more and more in their most holy faith. May we meet with thee in thine house, and have joy and pleasure in drawing near unto thee. May we by all thy ordinances, by prayer, by the ministry of thy word, and by thy sacraments, be made more meet for all the events of providence, for all the services and sufferings of this life, and for the state of perfection and glory in the world to come."

About this time the writings of Mr. Woolston, against revelation, were attracting considerable attention, and were the occasion of many acute and able replies, in which the objections he urged were very completely and satisfactorily answered ; so that, indirectly, his labours promoted a much better purpose than he designed, and tended rather to the furtherance of the gospel : certainly much more so by the reception they met with in this way, from those who were prepared to defend their Master's cause by reason and argument, than by the uncalled-for interference of the magistrate. It is true that Mr. Woolston had not been contented with attacking revealed religion by fair arguments, but, like many others, both before and since, descended to unworthy ribaldry and abuse ; treating the miracles of our Saviour in a tone of buffoonery and licentious levity, which could not but prove highly offensive to every serious mind ; but was so far from increasing the danger to be apprehended from his book, that it could hardly fail to repel many from a cause which was maintained by such unworthy weapons. On the other hand, when the strong arm of the law is brought to

bear upon the controversy, a reaction is likely to arise, especially in the minds of those who, not being themselves well versed in the argument, are apt to form their judgment of the merits of the case from the conduct and temper of the disputants. The victim of persecution, or he who has a plausible pretext for representing himself as such, with a little dexterous management may often so far secure the sympathy of the public, as to obtain more benefit to his cause from the indiscretion of his enemies than he could possibly have done by any other means. Mr. Lardner came forward on this occasion with a very able pamphlet, entitled, "A Vindication of three of our blessed Saviour's Miracles; namely, the raising of Jairus's daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus." The objections, perhaps, were hardly worthy of such a refutation; but the work abounds with judicious and admirable observations, and, besides, contains in the preface a testimony to the proper mode of conducting religious controversy, which is truly honourable to the author.

"If, then, men should be permitted among us to go on in delivering their sentiments freely in matters of religion, and to propose their objections against Christianity itself, I apprehend we have no reason to be in pain for the event. On the side of Christianity I expect to see, as hitherto, the greatest share of learning, good sense, true wit, and fairness of disputation; which things, I hope, will be superior to low ridicule, false argument, and misrepresentation.

"For aught I can see, in an age so rational as this we live in, the victory over our enemies may

be speedily obtained. They will be driven to those manifest absurdities which they must be ashamed to own, and be silent in dread of universal censure. But suppose the contest should last for some time, we shall all better understand our Bibles ; we shall, upon a fresh examination, better understand the principles and the grounds of our religion. Possibly some errors may be mixed with our faith, which by this means may be separated, and our faith become more pure. Being more confirmed in the truths of our religion, we shall be more perfect in the duties of it. Instead of being unthinking and nominal, we shall become more generally thinking and real Christians ; each one of which advantages will be a large step toward a complete and final victory.

“ This victory thus obtained, on the ground of argument and persuasion alone, by writing and discourse, will be honourable to us and our religion ; and we shall be able to reflect upon it with pleasure. We shall not only keep that good thing we have received, but shall deliver it down to others with advantage. But a victory secured by mere authority is no less to be dreaded than a defeat. It may appear a benefit for the present, but really undermines the cause, and strikes at the root of our holy profession.” (xi. 5.)

In 1730, Mr. Lardner wrote his celebrated letter on the Logos. It was originally a private letter to Lord Barrington, and not intended for publication ; and, in fact, remained in the author's cabinet for nearly thirty years, not making its appearance till 1759. From a passage in the tract above mentioned, in reply to Woolston, pointed out by Dr. Kippis, evidently implying

that the author was at that time a believer in the pre-existence of Christ,—it seems most probable that the letter on the Logos contains the result of investigations in which he had only very recently engaged, and the statement of opinions he had just embraced.

In 1733, appeared the first volume of the second part of the "Credibility of the Gospel History." The main object of this extensive and most valuable work is, to collect into one view the train of historical evidence by which we are authorized to receive the books of the New Testament as genuine, and, consequently, authentic and credible. If it be asked, why we receive any ancient work as in reality the production of its reputed author, our answer is, that it has been handed down to us from those times by an uninterrupted tradition; that though, perhaps, no copy of the work is actually extant which can with any probability be referred to that remote period, yet it has been described, quoted, and commented on, by a succession of intervening writers, in such a manner as to prove that the work we have in our hands, presenting the same passages which they profess to have quoted from it, is the same in all essential respects with that which existed in their time. The genuineness of the writings ascribed to these intervening witnesses, and in which their testimony is contained, is of course determined chiefly in the same manner, but partly also from the constant consent of all succeeding times, and from the correspondence of their contents with the known character of the supposed authors, and the events, opinions, and controversies, of the age

in which they lived. Now, when this principle of evidence is applied to the books of the New Testament, it is not enough to say that they possess the same marks and proofs of genuineness with the books ascribed to Cicero, Livy, Virgil, &c.; we find upon examination that the argument, though of the same kind, is beyond all comparison more extensive, complete, and satisfactory. But to collect and place in one view, or rather, (for this is impossible,) to reduce into one consecutive series the various testimonies derived from a multitude of writers in a succession of centuries, of which that evidence consists, requires, as will readily be imagined, a prodigious extent of reading and laborious research. This important labour Dr. Lardner has performed; and the result is placed, not merely within the reach of the scholar, (though he is of course more competent to judge of its value,) but also of the English reader, who assuming (as he may with confidence on the combined authority of all persons of every party who are qualified to express an opinion) that the translations are correct and the historical statements to be relied upon, may satisfy himself of the main fact, that the books we now possess can be traced up to a period approaching in antiquity that of the supposed authors to whom they have been uniformly ascribed, and that they have been transmitted to us without any material change.

To exhibit this argument in its entire state, and to enable the reader to judge of its full value, it is obviously necessary to present each passage in which any book of the New Testament is either expressly cited or evidently alluded to;

and to shew, by a comparison of the quotation with the corresponding portion of our modern editions, that the ancient writer had in his hands a book substantially the same with that which now exists. It is also necessary to give such an account of the witnesses themselves as may furnish a fair estimate of their credibility ; that is to say, the reasons derived from the history of the times, from the general state of the Christian world, from the character and reputation of the writers in question, determined by the concurring information both of contemporary and succeeding authors who recorded their lives, and enumerated and described their works,—which authorize us to rely upon what we read, and to believe that in the books which bear their names we have what is equivalent to the testimony of living witnesses, to the fact, that the writings now ascribed to the apostles and evangelists existed in their times, were ascribed to the same persons, and possessed the same authority which is yielded to them at the present day. In this manner, proceeding step by step, either tracing the proof upward from our own time, or, as Lardner has preferred, pursuing the stream from its source, till he brings it down to the commencement of what may be termed modern literature, we find a close and uninterrupted tradition ; a chain of evidence, every link of which is intimately connected with that which follows, so that what now exists and is manifest to our senses is shewn to be in such a manner necessarily dependent upon that which has been, that we are bound to receive it with the same confidence and certainty.

It is obvious that to execute a plan like this,

upon such a scale, was a work of no ordinary magnitude ; it was, in fact, an undertaking which might be thought adequate to occupy the entire life of a laborious scholar. It may be added, that, important and interesting as the object might be, the reward was not to be sought in any shape which the children of this world are accustomed to value. For those who would take an interest in or avail themselves of labours like these, and who were competent to estimate either the excellence of their object, or the labour and talent displayed in their performance, are at all times comparatively few ; and those who were likely to seek to possess themselves of a work of such extent, which with all its merit was but scantily recommended by the usual attractions of popularity, were still fewer. Such a writer must consequently lay his account with reaping a limited harvest of popular favour, and look for his chief earthly reward in the consciousness of having performed a valuable service to the cause of God and of religion, which the discerning few would understand and appreciate ; and which, if it procured not for its author immediate fame with the multitude, would establish for him an undying, an ever-growing reputation with all those who duly value whatever contributes to promote the best interests of mankind. Our author reaped in full the reward which he sought for, and was not so inconsistent as to repine, because, in serving God, he did not also gain the wages of Mammon. The sale of the successive volumes of his great work seldom did much more than pay their expenses, and he finally disposed of the copyright of

the whole for the insignificant sum of a hundred and fifty pounds.

The second part of the "Credibility," exhibiting in full detail the historic evidence of the Christian scriptures, occupies in the original edition twelve volumes. The first of these, as we have already stated, appeared in 1733; and the succeeding volumes followed at various intervals as they were completed, the whole not being brought to a conclusion till the year 1755. The last volume contains a general recapitulation of the whole argument, and an abridged statement of the facts on which it depends, which concludes in the following terms:—

"And now, I hope, there needs not any long harangue to shew the force of our argument. In the first part of this work it was shewn, that there is not any thing in the books of the New Testament, however strictly canvassed, inconsistent with their supposed time and authors; which alone (as was formerly shewn at large) affords good reason to believe that they were written by persons who lived before the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in the 70th year of our Lord's nativity, according to the common computation.

"In this second part we have had express and positive evidence, that these books were written by those whose names they bear, even the apostles of Jesus Christ, and their well-known companions and fellow-labourers. It is the concurring testimony of early and later ages, and of writers in all countries in the several parts of the known world, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and of men of different sentiments in divers respects; for we

have had before us the testimony of those called heretics, especially in the third and fourth centuries, as well as Catholics. These books were received from the beginning with the greatest respect, and have been publicly and solemnly read in the assemblies of Christians throughout the world, in every age from that time to this. They were early translated into the languages of divers countries and people; they were quoted by way of proof in all arguments of a religious nature, and were appealed to on both sides in all points of controversy that arose among Christians themselves: they were likewise recommended to the perusal of others, as containing the authentic account of the Christian doctrine, and many commentaries have been written upon them to explain and illustrate them: all which affords full assurance of their genuineness and integrity. If these books had not been written by those to whom they are ascribed, and if the things related in them had not been true, they could not have been received from the beginning: if they contain a true account of things, the Christian religion is from God, and cannot but be embraced by serious and attentive men, who impartially examine, and are willing to be determined by evidence.”*

As Mr. Lardner advanced in the execution of this great work, the volumes as they appeared in succession were translated into German, Dutch, and Latin, by writers distinguished for their own original productions, and the author rose higher in esteem and reputation among the most eminent divines both at home and abroad. His correspondence was very extensive, and by

* Kippis's edition of Lardner's Works, v. 411.

no means confined to persons of his own religious connexion or opinions. Most of the learned foreigners who came to England visited Dr. Lardner, and often appear to have derived valuable assistance from him in the prosecution of their literary designs and pursuits.

While our author was engaged on the "Credibility," he appeared occasionally from the press with other minor but still very valuable productions. In 1737, he published, "Counsels of Prudence for the use of young People; a Discourse on the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove; in which are recommended general rules of prudence, with particular directions relating to business, conversation, friendship, and general usefulness." This excellent and judicious piece has been much and deservedly admired, as containing a store of sound and valuable advice; well adapted to the young persons for whom it was intended, and proceeding from a rare combination of the simplicity and godly sincerity of the pious Christian with the accurate knowledge of the world and of human nature, which is commonly the result only of a much more extensive intercourse with general society. It has been frequently reprinted, and, it may be hoped, has been of extensive service in promoting the important object for which it was designed and is so well fitted. The "Counsels of Prudence" were followed shortly afterwards by two excellent sermons against "conformity to this world," which contain a valuable treasure of practical wisdom in the application of genuine Christian principles to the conduct of men in society. In this discourse the author has executed, with great skill and

success, the somewhat delicate task of steering the middle path between too large an allowance to the customs and usages of the world, and the puritanical strictness which at that period still prevailed to a considerable extent among the descendants of those worthies who in a former age had been obliged, in a great measure, to go out of the world that they might preserve an unviolated conscience.

In 1740 Mr. Lardner lost his father, with whom he had till this time resided, ever since he quitted the family of Lady Treby. He died at the advanced age of eighty-seven, and had for some time been, as it were, the father of the dissenting ministry. He was one of the few still remaining who could look back to their youthful recollections of bonds and imprisonments which were the usual portion of the more active ministers of the dark and troubled times of the last two Stuarts. He is described as having been in his time a powerful and popular preacher; but had now been for several years laid aside through the infirmities of advanced age. His decease under such circumstances might by others be considered rather as a summons to his reward; his work being done, and the sufferings of mortality alone remaining to him in this world: nevertheless, his son records the event in terms which indicate how deeply and mournfully his mind was affected on the occasion. "I am," says he, "full of grief, and find it very difficult to bear up under the affliction. I entreat the Lord Almighty to be my father and protector, to support me, and to guide me in the remaining part of my life, so as that I may live to his praise and glory. I entreat and pray that

he will enable me to behave as a Christian, and one persuaded of his fatherly care and protection, and that this affliction may be improved by me for my further humiliation and repentance, for engaging in a closer dependence on God,—for quickening my preparations for another and a better world.”

Such expressions as these from the pen of a man like Lardner ought to be preserved, lest any of those who, in all succeeding ages, will know him chiefly as a scholar and a theologian, should hastily imagine that he was nothing more or better. Though, indeed, to say nothing of his excellent practical writings, they must be careless students of the “Credibility,” who fail to perceive in the biographical notices of the principal writers whose testimony he has occasion to record, and in a multitude of incidental traits, scattered here and there, abundant indications that the author was a man not only of extensive learning, but of deep and influential piety.

No production of old Mr. Lardner’s pen has reached our times; but such expressions as we have quoted, though the natural effusions of an amiable, filial attachment, may be received as a testimony that he who could inspire such a sentiment must have been not unworthy of it. Besides our author, he had one other son, Richard, a barrister, who died in 1733; and one daughter, married to Mr. Daniel Neal, well known for his “History of New England,” and still more for his “History of the Puritans.”

In the same year Mr. Lardner also lost his excellent friend and colleague, Dr. William Harris. His funeral sermon on this occasion was published, and contains a high and doubtless well-deserved

eulogium on that gentleman's character and talents. After his decease, Mr. Lardner had a unanimous invitation to undertake the pastoral charge of the congregation; but his various engagements, added to his increasing deafness, induced him to decline any other ministerial duty than that which he had already assumed in the pulpit. This he continued to exercise for some years longer, in connexion with the celebrated Dr. George Benson.

In 1743, our author published three Sermons on the argument in favour of Christianity derived from the present circumstances of the Jewish people. He shews, in a very distinct and satisfactory manner, the correspondence between the predictions of our Lord and the condition of that people since his time, especially since the destruction of their city and temple, and their consequent dispersion among all the nations of the earth; that it is agreeable also to many prophecies in the Old Testament; that it affords a strong proof that the Messiah expected by the Jews is already come, since he was to appear during the continuance of the second temple, of which it is now so many ages since there was no longer one stone left standing on another, and thus furnishes a decisive argument for the divine authority of the Gospel. He illustrates his argument on these different points with his usual judgment, candour, and fairness, and deduces the practical inferences and admonitions arising out of so signal an example of the retributive justice and moral government of Divine Providence with, perhaps, more than his ordinary force and impressiveness. Though he looks forward to a time, still, however, to all human appearance, as remote as ever, when the

branches that had been broken off should be grafted in again, he does not agree in the expectation which many have expressed, and which is perhaps the most general opinion, that the Jewish people will be again established in their own land, where the temple is to be rebuilt and the ceremonial law restored. He thinks it more probable, that, when the Jews shall have professed themselves believers in the Messiahship of Jesus, the result will be that the middle wall of partition will indeed be for ever broken down, and that all peculiarities of character and institutions, as well as of privileges, will be utterly done away; as there will then be no longer any occasion for the continuance of that standing evidence of the truth of the Christian system which we now derive from the permanent existence of the Jews as a distinct and peculiar people. This may be so; but perhaps, amidst the opposite speculations and conjectures of those who, on the strength of their own interpretations of prophecy, attempt to lift up the dread veil of futurity, the conclusion of the cool unprejudiced thinker will be, that it is better to leave questions of this sort where we found them; and if there be in scripture predictions yet unaccomplished of events still to take place in the history of this world, to wait till time shall at length have disclosed the mystery. The prophecies were not intended to make us prophets.

For a series of years, at this period of Mr. Lardner's life, very few events are recorded by his biographer. His disposition did not incline him to take any active part in public life, and his infirmity of deafness, though it might not altoge-

ther disqualify him for public business, naturally prevented his friends from seeking to place him in any of those situations which might tend to bring him personally much before the world. His days and years seem to have passed in a uniform course of laborious study, engaged for the most part in collecting the materials for his great work, the successive volumes of which appeared from time to time, bringing down the regular and unbroken chain to the commencement of the modern æra, and at the same time accumulating a large mass of highly curious and valuable information for the student of ecclesiastical history and theological literature.

In 1745, he received from the University of Aberdeen, by diploma, the degree of Doctor in Divinity. "This was an honour," says Dr. Kippis, "which our author did not solicit, but which, when it was bestowed upon him, he did not think it unbecoming in him to accept; preserving herein the due medium between seeking for such a distinction, and despising it when offered." His own remark, in the case of Dr. Hunt, deserves notice: "In the year 1729," says he, "the University of Edinburgh, out of a regard to his distinguished merit, complimented him with the highest honorary title in their gift, *a piece of respect not to be slighted by any man of letters.*" When we consider Dr. Lardner's extraordinary attainments and learning, the reflection which he made on receiving his degree, displayed a remarkable humbleness of mind. "I pray God," said he, "I may not be elevated by any acceptance my labours meet with, but that I may proceed with

humility, diligence, and integrity in the whole of my life.”*

In 1750, Dr. Lardner published a volume of Sermons, chiefly of a practical character. These sermons, it may be presumed, are a fair specimen of the usual style of his preaching, and probably afford us, at the same time, a tolerably exact criterion of the preacher's own mind and character. They are judicious and instructive; and the perusal of them cannot fail to be profitable to those who can be persuaded to bestow upon them the attention which they deserve. The style is correct and perspicuous, but altogether unadorned; the divisions are formal and inartificial, and the whole composition indicates as little as can be conceived of the rhetorician's art. The practical applications, though rational and sensible, scarcely ever rise to eloquence; displaying little of that *unction* which is perhaps indispensable in one who seeks to rouse the attention and interest the feelings of a popular audience. When we further consider the preacher's physical infirmity of extreme deafness, rendering it next to impossible that he should possess that power of modulating his voice which is almost essential to a public speaker, it is not perhaps to be much wondered at that his hearers were not numerous. Dr. Lardner himself, as he advanced in years, became more and more sensible of this; and he was in consequence induced, in 1751, to resign his office of morning preacher at Crutched Friars.

In 1753, Dr. Lardner printed, but without his

* Kippis's Life of Lardner, xxxvi.

name, "An Essay on the Creation and Fall of Man." After referring to the various modes which have been proposed of interpreting this difficult narrative, he proceeds to comment upon it as a true history to be understood in its literal sense, but apparently without pledging himself to any positive conclusion. On the argument for the Trinity, derived from the expression "Let *us* make man," he gives no decided opinion of his own, but contents himself with stating that of "many learned Christians," who suppose that the style common to princes and great men, who often speak in the plural number, is here ascribed to God. It is rather remarkable that he does not advert to the singular circumstance of there being two distinct accounts of the creation of man, differing materially from each other, and evidently, from the difference of style and other circumstances, not written by the same person. He then proceeds to the account of the *fall*, as he styles it, in conformity with the received usage; a usage, however, unauthorized by scripture, which nowhere employs the expression, and, in fact, contains no statement in any part of it from which we can fairly infer any degradation, either physical or moral, of Adam's posterity in consequence of his transgression. In speaking of the introduction of the serpent as an agent and speaker in the transaction, he says, "it is generally understood that here was the contrivance and agency of Satan." But he does not say that he himself either allows or questions this, and goes on, in commenting on the rest of the story, to speak of the serpent only. In his "general inferences," he expresses himself somewhat more decidedly in

opposition to the common notion of original sin, which he justly stigmatizes as, in reality, making God the author of sin. "What reason is there," he justly asks, "to apprehend so great an alteration made in the nature and powers of man by Adam's transgression? Let us, then, not be unwilling to consider, whether the consequences of the fall of our first parents be not aggravated by some; and let us be careful not to admit any schemes which are derogatory to God's honour, and which countenance or justify men in their allowed weaknesses or wilful transgressions." On the whole, however, this tract is a remarkable instance of the caution and reserve which our author still thought it prudent to use when he had occasion to touch in public on this and other controverted questions. With the exception of the passage just cited, he does not pledge himself to any positive conclusion, though an attentive reader may not find it difficult to trace the opinions to which he was chiefly inclined; and even to this he did not think it advisable to affix his name.

This is the more remarkable, as there is good reason to think that he was less reserved in the expression of his opinions from the pulpit on subjects on which it might be expected that a deviation from popular notions would render him obnoxious. But the fact may have been, that a preacher like Lardner, who had little or nothing of what is vulgarly called popularity to lose, might feel under less restraint than one who was more followed by the crowd, and who might therefore suffer more by offending its prejudices. It was his lot to address a small, but a select, at-

tached, intelligent, and reflecting audience; and though the ordinary strain of his preaching was, as we have stated, chiefly practical, yet it was founded on what he regarded as at once rational and evangelical principles, and consequently had habituated his congregation to such trains of thought as would dispose and enable them to enter into his views on many points for which he might consider the public at large as not prepared. Hence, for example, in three sermons on the Demoniacs mentioned in the New Testament, he openly defended the opinion since so ably maintained by Farmer, but which, however just and rational it may be thought, leads immediately to inferences altogether inconsistent with the notions commonly entertained of what is called the *plenary* inspiration of the sacred writers. Again, in a very interesting series of sermons on Phil. ii. 5—11, prepared by himself for the press, though not published till some years after his death, he lays before his hearers a clear and accurate statement of the three leading opinions maintained by different Christian sects on the person and dignity of Christ, giving the preference himself decidedly, and without reserve, to that which affirms in the language of St. Peter, that he was simply “a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him.”

In 1756 and 1757 appeared, in three volumes, the Supplement to the Credibility. Notwithstanding the strong terms in which we have spoken of our author's former publication, it is not, perhaps, too much to say of this, that it is the most generally interesting and useful of all his works. It is otherwise entitled, a History of the

Apostles and Evangelists, writers of the New Testament. "The first volume contains general observations on the Canon of the New Testament, and a History of the Four Evangelists, with the evidences of the genuineness of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and an examination of the times when these books were written. There is, likewise, a chapter concerning the time when the Apostles left Judea to go and preach the Christian religion to other countries; which event, our author thinks, could not have taken place till after the council at Jerusalem. The volume concludes with a discussion of the question, 'Whether any one of the first three Evangelists had seen the Gospel of the others before he wrote his own?' And here Dr. Lardner hath determined, with great appearance of reason and argument, that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, did not abridge or transcribe from each other, but are distinct, independent, and harmonious witnesses. The second volume comprehends the History of St. Paul, displaying the evidence of the genuineness of his *fourteen* Epistles, particularly that to the Hebrews, and ascertained the times in which they were written. In the third volume, the seven Catholic epistles, and the Revelation of St. John, are considered, and histories given of St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude. In conclusion, it is shewn, that there is no reason to believe that any of the sacred books of the New Testament have been lost."*

It is needless to say that such a work, by such a writer, contains a treasure of most valuable

* Kippis's Life of Lardner, lii.

and interesting information for all classes of readers, and, more especially, for all theological students. Indeed, it can scarcely be said that any one deserves this latter name who has not made it the subject of his most diligent and careful examination. We may not always agree with the author in his conclusions on some points relating to the history and authorship of several books of the New Testament, which have been the subjects of dispute; but he never gives his opinion without stating, at the same time, his reasons very fully and candidly, so that he commonly furnishes the reader with the means of forming his own judgment. This remark may apply particularly to the Epistle to the Hebrews; which he ascribes to St. Paul with a confidence which the evidence, as collected and stated by himself, will scarcely, we think, appear to authorize in the estimation of an unprejudiced and attentive reader. The same may, perhaps, be said of the authority ascribed to the Epistle of Jude, and the second Epistle of Peter; (at least, the second chapter;) with respect to which, however, the author allows that it would not be safe to receive any doctrinal interpretation on the strength of any passage cited from them, unless confirmed by other undisputed scriptures.

In the year 1758, appeared a letter to the well-known philanthropist, Mr. Jonas Hanway, remonstrating against the name of Magdalen Houses, which it was proposed to give to establishments for the reception of penitent females of loose character. He shews very clearly that the prevailing notion that Mary Magdalen was the woman mentioned in the seventh chapter of Luke, who washed

our Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and who is there called by the Pharisee a sinner, is unfounded. From the manner in which her name is introduced along with that of the wife of Herod's steward and other women, who ministered to him of their substance, there is every reason to believe that she was a woman of rank and property, against whom there is no ground for supposing that any imputation had ever existed. She had been the subject of one of our Lord's benevolent miracles; but of what nature the disorder was from which she was relieved, the expression of the Evangelist, that seven devils or demons had gone out of her, does not enable us to conjecture. However, she ever after manifested the most affectionate gratitude to her benefactor, and was distinguished by him with marked tokens of his esteem and regard, particularly as being the first to whom he made himself known after his resurrection. To call such an institution, therefore, a Magdalen-house, appears to be taking a very unwarrantable liberty with the name of an honourable, and, for any thing we know, truly excellent woman. The letter was sent too late; or, at all events, it did not prevent the name being given, though no one who attends to these considerations can fail to perceive its impropriety.

In 1759, Dr. Lardner published, but without his real name, the letter on the Logos, already mentioned as addressed to Lord Barrington, under the assumed name of Papinian, in the year 1730. It now made its appearance accompanied by two valuable postscripts; the first containing an explanation of the terms Spirit, Holy Spirit, the Spirit

of God, as contained in the scriptures; the second containing remarks on some passages of the late Dr. Clayton, Bishop of Clogher, in vindication of the Arian scheme. It is by this remarkable publication that our author is chiefly known in the department of dogmatic theology. The question professedly discussed is, Whether the Logos, understanding by that term, according to the Arian hypothesis, a great pre-existent *created* Spirit, who was employed by the Supreme as a subordinate agent in the creation of the world, occupied the place of a human soul in the person of Jesus Christ? Our author, after confessing that he was at one time inclined to this singular notion, now gives it up altogether; for the scriptures represent our Lord as exalted to power and great glory as a reward of his sufferings here on earth; whereas, it is difficult to conceive how such a being as Christ is here supposed to have been, could receive any exaltation, merely by being set over those creatures to whom, as their Creator, he was immeasurably superior before. Moreover, he is uniformly called in the New Testament, a *man*; a title which could not be properly ascribed to such an anomalous being as this hypothesis represents him to have been. Further, this supposition is inconsistent with any rational account of the temptation; for how could he who made the heavens and the earth be tempted by the offer of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? By removing him in reality so far from any participation in what can properly be termed human nature, it enervates the force of his example, and, in fact, as far as we are concerned, destroys it altogether. Finally, what is there ex-

traordinary or wonderful, upon this hypothesis, in Christ's resurrection? Or, rather, is it not much more difficult and amazing to conceive how such a being should ever, for any the slightest interval, be subject to death at all? The resurrection of Christ could then be no pattern or pledge of that of mankind at large, which is the plain doctrine of the New Testament. The author then proceeds to comment on several texts which are commonly supposed to favour this scheme, and particularly the introduction to St. John's Gospel, in which he conceives the term *λογος* to denote the divine wisdom personified,—an attribute of the divine nature, but not any being or person distinct from God the Father himself. When it is said the Word was made or became flesh, the term flesh denotes human nature in general; and the expression is equivalent to what we are elsewhere told, "that in him (Christ) dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead;"—"that in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge."

This is, perhaps, the principle of interpretation which is better adapted than any other to meet all the difficulties of this remarkable passage, and, under one modification or another, has united in its favour, perhaps, an increasing majority of Unitarian critics. "The notion of an inferior Deity," says Lardner, "pre-existing, and then incarnate, seems to have been brought into the church by some of the learned converts from heathenism, who had not thoroughly abandoned the principles in which they had been educated. Perhaps, likewise, they hoped by this means to render the doctrine of Christ more palatable to heathen people, especially their philosophers. Moreover,

the Christians of the second century, and afterwards, were too averse to all Jews in general, and even to believers, from among that people." (xi. 111.)

This treatise, though now bearing a high character and reputation, on account of the author's eminence, and containing, unquestionably, a great mass of acute and ingenious criticism on many of the most remarkable texts that relate or have been supposed to relate to the person, office, or dignity, of Christ, did not make any great impression, as we learn from Dr. Kippis, at the time of its first publication. The sentiments contained in it were those confined to a few persons, and others were not disposed to embrace them. It is needless to say that the case is now greatly altered; and, we trust, that increasing numbers will long continue to look to the Letter on the Logos with deep interest, not only as a valuable storehouse of sound argument and judicious criticism, but as marking, by its first appearance, a memorable epoch in the history and progress of religious truth.

In 1760, Dr. Lardner published a second volume of Sermons. These are of the same general character with the former series, inasmuch as they have all a practical and devotional tendency; though in some instances they relate more to doctrinal points and curious speculations, which, however, the author never fails to apply in such a manner as to promote the main and essential object of the Christian preacher. Several remarkable particulars in the last sufferings and death of our Lord,—his character, as described under the twofold title of Son of Man and Son of God,—his services rendered to the children of men, in

that while he was rich, he became poor (or lived in poverty), that we through his poverty might be rich,—are dwelt upon in a very interesting and instructive manner; so that the volume contains a rich and copious store of valuable information for the Christian disciple.

In 1762 appeared "Remarks on Dr. Ward's Dissertations on several Passages of Scripture;" containing an ingenious and instructive discussion of various historical and critical questions relating to sacred literature. One point on which Dr. Lardner expresses a very decided opinion in this publication may, nevertheless, be thought by some rather dubious. He strongly contests the notion of there having been two classes of proselytes to the Jewish religion, commonly called, proselytes of the gate and proselytes of righteousness; the latter of whom only, it is supposed, had obliged themselves to fulfil the whole law. If it is only intended to call in question the application of the term *proselyte* to any except persons of this latter class, the dispute is merely about the meaning of a word; but there are, surely, many indications of the existence of a numerous class of *devout persons*, who, though originally heathen, had abandoned the practice of idolatry, and were permitted to join in the worship of the synagogue, and even of the temple, without becoming, in the strict sense contended for by our author, proselytes. There is no appearance in the Old Testament of any requisition of this kind from those who professed their faith in the true God. The story of Izates, king of Adiabene, as related by Josephus, seems to prove that it was not insisted on in later times, except by certain foolish hot-headed zealots;

and it is difficult to believe that, in places remote from Palestine, the numbers who resorted to the synagogue worship, amounting, in some instances at least, to a "great multitude," (Acts xvii. 4,) obliged themselves thereby to observe the whole of the Jewish ritual.

In 1764, Dr. Lardner published, but without his name, a letter to Dr. Macknight, objecting to the view which that writer had given in his *Harmony of the history of our Lord's resurrection*. The problem of *harmonizing* these accounts, that is, of combining the reports of all the four Evangelists into one distinct and consistent narrative, has always been found a difficult one; and it may be doubted whether any solution that has been proposed is in all points satisfactory. Macknight's idea of a visit by the women to the sepulchre on the preceding evening after the close of the Jewish sabbath, is certainly very improbable, and quite unauthorized by the account of any one of the Evangelists. On the other hand, Lardner's supposition of only one appearance of our Lord to Mary Magdalene in the presence of the other women is equally arbitrary and gratuitous, and apparently contradicted by the narrative of Mark, if not by that of John. It may be practicable, but it certainly is not easy, to put all the four accounts together, in such a manner as to include every particular mentioned by each of them, and thus remove all ground for the imputation of contradictions. But it must be remembered that we derive our knowledge of these particulars from witnesses who beheld them under the influence of strongly excited feelings, which left them little leisure to attend to the minutiae of

place and time; that the latter especially could be marked by them only in a comparatively vague and indefinite manner; and that, at all events, even though the discrepancy on one or two incidental points should be not apparent only, but real, it will not disprove the testimony as to the main fact, but, on the contrary, put an end to the suspicion that the different narrators agreed upon a tale; in which case there would have been none of these difficulties, but we should have had one and the same account from all, agreeing in every particular. As it is, we have four distinct narratives, which proceed from as many distinct and independent witnesses.

Our author's time continued, however, to be chiefly occupied with the labours necessary to carry towards its conclusion the great business of his life; and this year he accordingly produced the first volume, in quarto, of a large Collection of Ancient Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion. Three more volumes successively appeared, and completed the work in 1767. It contains a general view of all the various illustrations which he had collected in the course of his extensive and laborious researches into the history and literature of those times which could in any way throw light on the main facts of the Gospel history, or on the history of the primitive church, and thus either strengthen the direct evidence, or serve to remove obscurities, difficulties, and objections. It would be scarcely possible, in any moderate compass, to give any distinct account of a work so multifarious and diversified in its character, though simple and uniform in its object. We can do no

more than recommend it to the diligent attention not merely of the theological student, but of every one who is desirous of duly understanding and appreciating the historical evidence of the religion he professes. The materials of this work were doubtless the gradual accumulations of the author's researches throughout the whole of the long period during which his attention had been chiefly directed to these subjects; but the preparation of a work of such magnitude after he had passed his eightieth year, and its completion, at that advanced age, within the short compass of three years, sufficiently proves that his powers of mind were preserved unimpaired to the last in a very extraordinary degree, and moreover continued in unintermitted exertion with a diligence and energy rarely observed in the period of health and strength, at a time when most men would think themselves entitled to rest from their labours. There is no indication of a decline of his powers in this or any of his later productions; indeed, Dr. Kippis informs us that he retained to the last the use of all his faculties, his hearing excepted, in a remarkable degree.

The fourth volume of the Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, the last of our author's productions which appeared in his lifetime, was published in 1767, when he had completed his eighty-third year. Even then, however, it was not in his nature to rest from his labours, or to decline further exertions; never thinking he had done enough so long as the ability still remained to him of working in his Master's vineyard. No sooner was the collection of Heathen Testimonies out of his hands, than he sat down to prepare the history of the Early Here-

tics of the Christian Church, in which he soon made considerable progress. But before he could complete this work, it pleased Divine Providence to call him to his reward. In the ensuing summer of 1768, he was seized with a rapid decline, which carried him off in a few weeks at Hawkhurst, the place of his nativity, where he had a small paternal estate. Here he died on the 24th of July of that year, in the 85th year of his age. His remains were interred in the burial ground at Bunhill Fields, where he who loves to meditate on the records of English Nonconformity finds so many impressive memorials to enliven his grateful recollection of the venerable dead.

Though Dr. Lardner was not permitted to finish his *History of Ancient Heretics*, his papers were found to be in such a state of forwardness as to justify his friends in committing them to the care of the Rev. John Hogg, of Exeter. By this gentleman the work was completed, under the guidance of such hints as the author himself had left for such parts as were not finished by his own hand, and finally published in 1780. Some allowance must, of course, be made for the circumstances in which this work was prepared, and, perhaps, for the inferior interest of the subject. It is, however, a subject of considerable interest and importance, and particularly well suited to so proverbially candid a writer as Lardner. No man would understand better how to make the necessary deductions from exaggerated, partial, and passionate statements;—remembering that we have our accounts of these (so called) heretics almost exclusively from the writings of their opponents, and that it is next to impossible, even for

those who have no disposition to pervert and misrepresent, to give a perfectly fair account of parties and opinions which he does not himself approve. Under these circumstances it is clearly impossible, in the nature of things, that we should have a history of ancient heretics that can be thoroughly depended on ; but Lardner's, probably, approaches as near to it as is practicable with our present imperfect and partial sources of information.

Besides this larger work, eight sermons, most of which had been transcribed and prepared for the press by the author himself, were published after his decease, with a memoir of his life and writings. The fifth and sixth of these are the sermons before referred to, preached at the Old Jewry lecture, as containing a sort of sketch of the argument of his great work, particularly of that part of it which relates to the facts occasionally mentioned in the Gospel History. Another valuable series of sermons on Philippians ii. 5-11, which have already been mentioned, were first published in 1784, by the Rev. Mr. Wiche, of Maidstone.

JAMES FOSTER,

One of the brightest ornaments of the school of liberal and rational divines among the Protestant dissenters in the earlier part of the last century, was born at Exeter, September 16, 1697. His grandfather was a clergyman at Kettering, in Northamptonshire; but his father having been brought up by a Nonconformist uncle, himself embraced the same religious profession. His mother is spoken of as a woman of great worth and excellence; and he may, therefore, probably be added to the list of eminent men, in various departments of life, who have derived from maternal influence and example no small portion of the virtues and graces which afterwards distinguished them. He received the first part of his education at the free school of his native city; where he is said to have given early indications of talent and proficiency. He afterwards became a member of the academy already spoken of as conducted by Mr. Hallet, at which several other men of high and deserved eminence were prepared for the Christian ministry. Here we are informed* that "he was admired by his tutor and fellow-students as having natural abilities superior to most, a quick apprehension, a solid judgment, a happy memory, a free commanding elocution. In his public exercises his thoughts were clear, his talents for argumentation

* Funeral Sermon, by Dr. Fleming, p. 8.

great, his modesty and integrity remarkable; and for the strictness of his piety, the candour of his spirit, the tenderness and benevolence of his heart, he was highly esteemed. From his first coming to the academy, he had a sovereign contempt of *human authority* in all matters of religious opinion, faith, and practice. Nothing would convince him short of reason and argument."

Mr. Foster began to preach in the year 1718, when the violent ferment of religious bigotry which terminated in the expulsion from their charges of his tutor and his colleague Mr. Peirce, was rapidly coming to a crisis. And we cannot doubt that, independently of the personal influence of his instructor, who was so deeply involved in this memorable struggle, the naturally enlarged and liberal mind of Foster would lead him to take a warm interest in the controversy, and to resent, in terms perhaps stronger and less measured than his more cautious and discreet seniors would permit themselves to use, the extravagant and inconsistent proceedings of those who, when only beginning to enjoy a toleration themselves, attempted to impose articles of faith upon others. He already began to display those qualifications as a preacher which afterwards raised him to so much distinction; and there can be no doubt that, if he had belonged to the popular party, he would presently have been called upon to take a leading place as the minister of some numerous and considerable congregation. But he had from the first espoused the liberal principles which characterized him through life; and at this period of strong religious excitement, clamours rose high against him; for his notions of integrity and sincerity could

not be satisfied, like those of many in similar circumstances, with a systematic concealment of what he believed to be divine truth. He had formed his judgment, and he felt himself bound to declare it, and to appear publicly in defence of it. Nor was it possible at that time distinctly to foresee to what extent the clamour and violence of the hostile party, already excited to a high degree of bitterness, might carry them. Intolerant laws were in being, which, though they lay dormant, had been passed at no such distant period that they could as yet be said to be in any sense obsolete; and the rigorous treatment which had actually been experienced by that eminent Christian divine and confessor, Thomas Emlyn, was still fresh in every one's recollection.

At length he accepted of an invitation to settle with a congregation at Milbourne Port, in Somersetshire, where, however, he does not appear to have remained long. His unpopular sentiments on the points in dispute soon made him obnoxious to a prevailing party, whose influence rendered his situation so uneasy, that he was induced to retire to the house of his friend, the Rev. N. Billingsley, of Ashwick, near the Mendip hills; a gentleman who seems to have afforded a temporary asylum to more than one young man of merit when labouring under the stigma of heresy in these troubled times. While in this secluded retreat, Mr. Foster undertook the charge of two plain congregations in that wild district, which together raised him only fifteen pounds a year. Some of his best works are said to have been composed in an old summer house, almost covered with ivy, on the property of J. Billingsley, Esq.,

who caused a small stone with the following inscription to be placed in the building:—

“Sacred to the memory of the celebrated James Foster, D.D., who in this humble and retired mansion, secluded from the fury of bigots and the cares of a busy world, spent several years, and composed many of those excellent discourses on natural religion and social virtue (with the annexed offices of devotion) which have been read with universal admiration during the last and present ages; and which, while they exhibit to posterity the most beautiful display of the divine attributes and important duties of human life, will immortalize the name and memory of their learned and pious author.”*

Notwithstanding these discouraging circumstances, and the small prospect which the prevailing state of public feeling on the religious disputes of the day held out to him of acquiring that acceptance and opportunity of usefulness for which his dispositions and character fitted him, and to which his eminent talents entitled him to aspire, he still retained great cheerfulness, and pursued his studies with undiminished application. “His chief view,” says a worthy divine who knew him well, “was to maintain his own integrity and to promote the honour of his great Lord; bearing difficulties with a rational firmness and calm submission to the Divine will.”† He was, doubtless, earnestly desirous to be actively employed in his Master’s cause, and in the ex-

* Murch’s History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England, p. 159.

† Fleming, p. 9.

ercise of the Christian ministry in some distinguished field, for which his education and abilities had well prepared him; but he would not stoop, even for this purpose, to mean and dishonest compliances, or to an outward conformity with what he believed to be contrary to the revealed word of God.

Here he wrote his celebrated *Essay on Fundamentals in Religion*, which was first published in 1720. This tract, considering the circumstances in which it was written, the condition of the writer, and the temper of the times, is certainly a very remarkable production. It contains not only a just and clear statement of the principles by which we are to determine what is and what is not fundamental in religion, (that is, essential to the character of a true Christian whom God approves and will accept), but an honest and manly declaration of his own sentiments, and his determination to cast in his lot with the calumniated confessors who had recently suffered loss and gone through evil report for avowing the conclusions to which they had been led by their unbiassed inquiries into scripture. He lays down these two principles,—“that no doctrine is a fundamental and necessary article of a Christian’s faith, but what is so plainly and distinctly revealed that an ordinary Christian, sincere and honest in his inquiries, cannot miss of the knowledge of it; and, secondly, that it is not sufficient that a proposition be clearly revealed to make it fundamental, but a belief of it must also be made an express term or condition of happiness in the sacred writings.” It is impossible to suppose that an infinitely wise and good Being should

have made the blessings of his grace dependent on conditions which his moral creatures might not be competent to fulfil; or on just views of obscure and doubtful points on which honest and inquiring men, in the conscientious use of the faculties which he had given them, and the sources of information which he had placed within their reach, might differ. To suppose this, especially when consequences of such overwhelming importance, in both directions, are represented as being dependent on a right or a wrong faith on these points, would be to make Christianity a curse rather than a blessing. Again, if there be any tenets properly fundamental, in the sense in which this term is frequently used, (such, namely, that except a man believe in them he cannot be saved,) we should at least expect to find them distinctly expressed, not merely in catechisms and creeds, but by that authority which can alone establish the terms and conditions of salvation. Hence it follows, "that no Christian who has the liberty of looking into his Bible, and who uses that liberty, can err in fundamentals; so that none of the points which are at present debated by great numbers on all sides, and on which opposite opinions are undeniably maintained, in all honesty, by perfectly sincere and conscientious men, can be essential to salvation." The author then proceeds to enter somewhat more into particulars, and to apply these general principles to the scriptural evidence adduced in support of the Trinitarian scheme, to shew that it is nowhere even expressly maintained or asserted in the New Testament; but is only deduced by its supporters as a consequence or inference from

what is revealed, and is still further from being prescribed as a positive term or condition of salvation, and therefore utterly fails in both the criterion by which we are to estimate the claims of any tenet to be included in the catalogue of supposed fundamentals.

Here and elsewhere the author espouses the Arian principles of Peirce and Emlyn, which the talents and well-earned reputation of these distinguished men rendered almost universally prevalent among the English Anti-trinitarians of that period; but the exposure of the leading tenets of Calvinism, and particularly of the entire absence of any adequate scriptural evidence for them, though concise, is very distinct and complete. While he admits (or rather takes for granted, without assigning any direct evidence for his conclusion) that a species of worship is due from his disciples to Christ in his character of Mediator, he labours to distinguish between this subordinate homage and the supreme worship paid to the Father only. But on what principle this sort of subordinate worship is to be reconciled with that solemn injunction of him to whom it is proposed to be addressed, "In that day ye shall ask me *nothing*, but whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," he nowhere attempts to explain. On the strength, we presume, of this modified homage, which Unitarians, according to him, are justified in offering to their Saviour, he seems to think that the two parties might conscientiously unite in the same religious services. Here, however, lies the principal weakness of his argument, which proves only that most of the points on which the con-

tending parties differ are not essential to salvation, or necessary to furnish a basis for the practical principles, the hopes, and promises of the Gospel ; —that this is to be found, and to be found *only*, in that treasure of undisputed truth which is held alike by all sects, every where, and at all times ; “ *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus.*” This he proves triumphantly ; but it does not therefore follow, that he who believes that Christ is the proper object of supreme worship, though he should allow that his Unitarian brother possesses the essentials of the Gospel, could reconcile it to his conscience to confine himself to that form of worship in which alone the latter could unite. Here it seems unavoidable that the two parties should travel in separate paths, and charitably agree to differ.

The publication attracted considerable attention, and raised a great additional clamour against the author, from those who had recently been excited by so much bigoted animosity against what they were pleased to style the “ *new notions* ;” and who were incessant in their endeavours not to refute his arguments, but to blacken his character, and render him obnoxious to the illiberal and narrow-minded. Their conduct, however, in this respect, did not provoke him to a retaliation unworthy of his enlightened and candid mind, or lead him to forget what was due from a consistent follower of a meek and suffering Saviour ; so that he might say with the Apostle, “ being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it, being defamed we entreat.”

From Ashwick, Mr. Foster, after some time, removed to Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, where was

a small Presbyterian congregation, not consisting at that time of more than twenty or thirty persons. Here, in consequence of reading Dr. Gale's Treatise on Infant Baptism, he was induced to give up that practice, and to acknowledge his belief that the baptism of adults by immersion is the true scriptural rite;—in conformity with which conviction he was soon afterwards baptized according to that mode in London. Whatever may be our opinion as to the correctness of his conclusion on this controverted point, it cannot be doubted that by thus avowing and publicly acting on his conviction, he gave a strong proof of that integrity and disinterested attachment to what he conceived to be the truth, which he had already evinced, and which continued throughout life to be a leading feature of his character. For his public adoption of this opinion and practice must, of necessity, have materially narrowed the field in which he might reasonably hope for an invitation to labour as a Christian minister. Most of the congregations which at that period adopted more liberal principles, and, consequently, deviated from Calvinism, were of the Presbyterian denomination, among whom it was reasonable to presume that his rejecting the practice of infant baptism would be a material, if not an insuperable obstacle; while the number of Baptist congregations, with whom his heretical opinions would not be a decisive objection, was at that time exceedingly small.

With his little flock at Trowbridge, the change did not operate to his disadvantage; but still the sphere was so very limited, and the support they were able to afford him so very scanty, that he

had serious thoughts of betaking himself to a secular employment, and with this view set about learning the trade of glove-making, which was the occupation of the person with whom he lodged. At this time, however, he met with a kind and valuable friend in Robert Houlston, Esq., who took him into his house in the capacity of domestic chaplain, and treated him with much kindness and generosity; for which he did not fail to come in for his share of the obloquy and abuse heaped upon his protégé by those who, in the superabundance of their zeal for what they held to be Christian truth, were but too apt to forget Christian charity. A virulent pamphlet, in reply to the *Essay on Fundamentals*, supposed to be written by a clergyman, falls foul both upon the author and his patron, calling the one a deceiver and an antichrist, and invoking the displeasure of heaven upon the other for harbouring a pestilent heretic.

During his residence with Mr. Houlston, an opportunity was afforded to Mr. Foster of cultivating a more extended and varied intercourse with general society, in which his talents and character gained him much acceptance. Here, however, he did not continue long; for in the year 1724, on the death of Dr. Gale, he was invited by the Baptist congregation in Barbican, London, to become their minister; and on the first of July in that year was ordained to this charge as colleague with Mr. Burroughs, with whom he laboured in the pastoral connexion with the utmost cordiality for more than twenty years. Thus he was enabled, much sooner than could at one time have been anticipated, to enter upon the

reward of that integrity which marked the trying scenes of his outset in life,—“ A reward which is not, indeed, allotted by the wise and gracious Governor of the universe for all who in the same situation may have proved themselves equally sincere, but which is, however, abundantly and richly compensated by those inward consolations and joys that have in innumerable instances so well supported the upright and honest mind under the want of it. But, surely, there would be the utmost impropriety in supposing that the reward of virtue must needs debase its honour and diminish its worth. On the contrary, its natural tendency is to animate and confirm it.”*

In the year 1728, Mr. Foster engaged in a Sunday evening lecture at the Old Jewry, which he continued as long as his powers of body and mind remained, with a degree of popularity at that time unexampled among dissenting ministers. “ Here,” says Dr. Fleming, “ was a confluence of persons of every rank, station, and quality—wits, free-thinkers, numbers of *clergy* ; who, while they gratified their curiosity, had their prepossessions shaken, and their prejudices loosened. And of the usefulness and success of these lectures, he had a large number of written testimonials from unknown as well as known persons. The flowers of oratory grew here upon the plant of divine truth and reason, from which his audience might gather fruit of the highest mental taste and moral complexion. And what gave the finishing stroke of this character was, that his popularity did not rob him of his humi-

* Funeral Sermon, by C. Bulkeley, p. 10.

lity and modesty, nor injure his Christianity. He used no delusive arts to bribe the passions, to play with the imagination, and so impose on the understanding. He had no ambiguities, no disguises; but whatever he thought an important truth, he delivered with freedom, and without reserve."

Mr. Foster's modesty, and uncommon talents as a preacher, it is well known, have been immortalized by Pope in one of those striking epigrammatic couplets which exhibit the poet's remarkable and somewhat formidable power over the character and reputation of men, by which, as the humour seized him, he knew how to "damn to everlasting fame," or "pay a life of hardship by a line."

Let modest Foster, if he will, excel
Ten metropolitans in preaching well.

In the year 1731, our author appeared in the field as an advocate for revelation, in the controversy which was at that time actively agitated with Morgan, Tindal, Woolston, and other well-known deistical writers, and which produced or suggested some of the most valuable contributions to our collection of works on the evidences of religion, both natural and revealed. In this respect it certainly afforded a remarkable practical illustration of the great principle openly maintained and defended by several of the most distinguished champions of revelation, especially among the dissenters; and not only maintained, but perhaps more fully acted upon in practice than it had ever been on any former occasion;—the advantage which truth must ever gain from a

perfect freedom of discussion on both sides, unbiassed by the interference of the civil magistrate.

Mr. Foster's treatise is entitled "The Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency of the Christian Revelation defended against the Objections contained in a late Book, intituled 'Christianity as old as the Creation.'" It is introduced by the following just and liberal statement of the principles on which such discussions ought always to be conducted: "As religion is of the highest importance to mankind, free debates about it ought, above all things, to be encouraged. This is the only way to settle the true nature of it, and fix it upon a solid foundation, that truth and falsehood, superstition and rational piety, may not equally prevail under that venerable name; and to support it by methods of restraint and violence is not only an infringement of the most sacred natural rights of mankind, but a dishonour to religion itself. It makes a good cause suspected, and gives every little insinuation of its adversaries, without proof, the air of probability. And as all honest men have no concern but for truth, and never suffer their passions, prejudices, or worldly interests to influence their religious inquiries, they can desire nothing more than that the argument should be clearly stated, and urged in its utmost strength on both sides; and must be as ready to give up any particular scheme of religion on sufficient evidence of its falsehood, as they were to defend and propagate it while they believed it to be true. Let those who do not believe the Christian religion be allowed to throw off all disguises, and attack it with all the skill and strength of argument they are capable of.

Let not such as write in defence of it claim any privilege above their opponents, merely because they write on the popular and orthodox side of the question, since the natural rights of both parties are equal. We need not be afraid of the consequences; for truth can never suffer by being brought to the most critical test of impartial reason; and it is the interest of mankind that falsehood should be detected and exposed."

The author then enlarges, first, on the advantage of a revelation, and particularly of the Christian, and on the use and evidence of miracles. The main argument of his opponent's treatise, as its title implies, was intended to shew that the doctrines and principles of Christianity, in as far as they are just and rational, are such as men might have discovered for themselves; and, in fact, had in many instances ascertained and acknowledged. To this it is justly replied, that even if all this were granted, it would not prove a revelation superfluous, if it appears that mankind had placed themselves in such circumstances, that prevailing ignorance, the force of unconquerable prejudices, idolatry, superstition, and wickedness, had depraved their minds and perverted their understandings. Whatever might be the natural powers of the human understanding, or whatever might be the cause of the delusion and ignorance under which men almost universally laboured, it must, at least, be admitted that these lamentable effects did exist; that as long as they existed, they were inconsistent with the true improvement and happiness of man, and therefore it is consistent with our views of divine

wisdom and goodness to conclude that especial means would be adopted to dispel this delusion, and diffuse the influence of light and truth.

In this sense it might even be granted, that the gospel was nothing more than a " republication of the religion of nature;" even though it could be shewn that a time had actually existed in some primeval golden age, when the most honourable notions of the Divine perfections and character, and the purest principles of religion and morality were generally professed and acknowledged, and that these principles, so influencing the practice of men, had, in the first instance, been investigated and ascertained, and recommended to the general acceptance by the arguments and persuasions of philosophers, guided to the truth by the solitary torch of unaided human reason,—though all this could be made out, still if this religion of nature had become obsolete, and if mankind, by whatever means, had relapsed into such a state that it was no longer probable that the torch should be again illuminated, still less that its guidance should be generally followed, we can hardly allow it to be any imputation on the wisdom of God, that in the fulness of time he saw fit to substitute in its place the daylight of Gospel truth. Yet, after all, it appears that, with respect to many of the distinguishing principles of Christianity, all that can be alleged is, that when they are made known by an authority competent to discover and establish them, they approve themselves to our reason as consistent, right and good. But it does not follow, that what human reason is ready to acknowledge under

these characters, when made known by external instruction, it would have been able to search out and ascertain by its own unassisted exertions.

In the view which our author has given of the evidence derived from miracles, he makes some concessions which the truth does not appear to require, and which might affect materially the validity of the argument founded upon them. He allows, indeed, that we can easily pronounce concerning any appearance alleged to be miraculous, that it exceeds the limits of human power or knowledge, and consequently implies the introduction of a superior agency; but he does not see any good reason why such miracles (by which term, in this connexion, he intends merely such works as no human being could perform) should not be ascribed to superior created beings, who, for any thing we know to the contrary, may be permitted to interfere in the direction of events in this world, in a manner imperceptible to us, and so as to produce effects which vastly exceed the natural agency of the immediate and visible instruments. Hence, as we know not what degree of power such agents may possess, and have no *positive proof* that they may not be at the same time depraved and wicked, it would seem that we have no criterion in the nature of the things themselves to enable us to say that any works are properly miraculous, that is, that they afford a direct evidence of a divine commission. In order to determine this point, we have no other resource, according to him, but to compare the alleged revelation with the dictates of our own reason; if that pronounces it to be worthy of the source from which it professes to emanate,

we receive it; if otherwise, no miracles could give it authority. "For instance, (p. 53,) if a person pretends to bring a revelation from heaven that directly recommends and encourages intemperance, injustice, and cruelty, and such like notorious and hurtful immoralities, I cannot see how any common man, who makes the least use of that understanding which God hath given him, can be imposed upon to embrace a scheme so destructive of the plainest obligations of virtue, and of the peace and happiness of the world, by ten thousand miracles. He has it in his power easily to detect the falsehood of all such doctrines, how pompously so ever they are supported. From what has been said, it appears that miracles alone do not prove the truth of any religion, because we cannot pretend to say of any miraculous effects, at least not of most of the miracles which are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, that they are performed by God only."

To all this it seems enough to reply, that if absurd suppositions are made, it cannot be wondered at, that absurd conclusions should follow. We deny, not only that the case here supposed ever did happen, but that it ever could happen. It is a supposition inconsistent with the views we cannot but form of the infinite wisdom which directs the moral government of the world. In fact, we have no ground, either from reason or revelation, to suppose that superior created beings are empowered, at their own discretion, to take any part in the affairs of this earth, or in any manner to influence the condition or conduct of mankind, still less to alter or controul the ordinary course of events, so as to produce effects

apparently miraculous, for the purpose of deluding us by a false show of divine revelation. It may be said, that none but an evil and wicked spirit would avail himself of such a power to give a delusive sanction to erroneous and pernicious principles; and therefore the internal evidence, the intrinsic excellence of the system itself, as estimated by our own understandings, is conclusive proof of the reality of the miracle, and, consequently, of the divine authority of the message. But may it not be supposed that good spirits, like some well-meaning but mistaken men, may seek to deceive us with a "pious fraud," in support of a system which, though without foundation, the wise and good might wish to be true? The concession, therefore, is a most dangerous one; but, happily, neither the history of the world, nor the appearance of things around us, affords the smallest countenance to such a supposition, which is, besides, contradicted by the views that both nature and reason encourage us to form of the agency of the One Supreme, as bringing about, by its direct and immediate operation, the various phenomena which we behold.

In the succeeding chapter, the author vindicates the conduct of Divine Providence, in not making the Christian revelation universally known; shewing that this is conformable to what we see around us in the various distribution of the other gifts of his bounty; and, consequently, that any objection to revelation, proceeding upon this ground, would prove too much, since it applies equally to those advantages and benefits which the votary of natural religion, if he believes in a providence at all, cannot but ascribe to its agency. In the

third chapter he examines more particularly the external evidence of revelation, "shewing that we have a sufficient probability, even at this distance, of the authenticness, credibility, and purity of the books of the New Testament; and that the common people are able to judge of the truth and uncorruptedness of a traditional religion; with an answer to the arguments drawn from the change of languages, the different use of words, the style and phrase of scripture, &c., to prove it to be an obscure, perplexed, and uncertain rule." The work concludes with a vindication of positive institutions; particularly of the few and simple positive ordinances of the Gospel. In various parts of the work we have an able exposure of the manner in which sceptical writers are apt to confound the corruptions of Christianity with Christianity itself,—an artifice for which the unhappy differences among Christians, and the multitudes of unauthorized additions, commandments of men, often foreign to the spirit and inconsistent with the tendency and design of the Gospel, have at all times afforded but too much scope.

On the whole, this treatise is written with great clearness of thought and expression, and reflects much credit on the abilities and ingenuity of the author. It met with such general approbation from the judicious and candid of all parties, that repeated impressions were soon demanded by the public. Even Dr. Tindal, against whose work it was written, is said always to have spoken of it with great respect. In one particular it certainly well deserves to be held up as a model for controversial treatises; that its attack is

confined altogether to the doctrine and arguments of his opponent, and these are examined with fairness and candour, without any attempt to prejudice the reader, or to resort to any of those artifices by which the disputants, not for truth but for victory, or for something more sordid and unworthy still, too commonly seek to divert the attention from the main question, and make the worse appear the better cause. As, on the one hand, he utterly disclaims and repudiates the dubious alliance of the civil magistrate, as rather weakening than promoting the cause it aims to support, in the estimation of the candid and reflecting, so, on the other, he makes no attempt to depreciate the character, or diminish the influence of his antagonist by injurious imputations. We cannot but be persuaded, that if the votaries of the truth had always shewn the same well-grounded confidence in the intrinsic strength of their cause, so as to disclaim the use of such unhallowed weapons, the interests of religion and virtue would have been greatly promoted, and many apparent and temporary triumphs to infidelity,—triumphs due not to its own evidence or the ability of its advocates, but to the skill with which they have taken advantage of the short-sighted policy of the friends of revelation,—would have been altogether prevented.

In 1734, Mr. Foster published a volume of sermons, which speedily attracted a degree of attention proportioned to that which they had received when delivered from the pulpit. Three additional volumes made their appearance successively,—the last in 1744. These sermons certainly possess very considerable merit; but it

is not exactly the kind of merit which the traditionary accounts of the extraordinary popularity of their author, as a preacher, and the crowds of all ranks and classes who are said to have flocked to hear him, and that not for a short time, or on a few occasions only, but through a period of more than twenty years, would have led us to anticipate. For it would be difficult to select from the whole range of English pulpit eloquence any compositions which indicated less solicitude in the author to please the ear of the multitude, or to aim at the showy but inferior character of the mere "popular preacher." They are mostly plain and practical,—serious and augmentative,—evangelical in the best and only proper sense of the word. They are well fitted to illustrate the remark which has frequently been made, that the real vital faith of Christians is, in a great measure, one and the same; depending not on sectarian peculiarities,—not on those points which have been chiefly the subjects of controversy and debate, but on the broad and comprehensive truths relating to the perfections and providence of God, the heavenly message of the gospel of Christ, and the duties and expectations of men as founded upon it, which are at once of primary importance, and so simple in their character and clear in their evidence, that they are held alike by all sects, and have never been the subjects of dispute. But the consequence is, as we might naturally conclude from our author's rational good sense and sincerity, that there is throughout a complete absence of what prevailing parties have been accustomed to call the *peculiar doctrines* of the Gospel; and wherever there is a passing reference to

sectarian distinctions, it is of a kind which might be expected immediately to alarm the prejudices of the self-styled orthodox. Again, the style of composition, though uniformly correct, and often what we might call elegant, presents surprisingly little of what would commonly be called oratory. It is, for the most part, perfectly plain and simple, with no rhetorical ornaments or flights of declamation. It is calm reasoning, addressed almost exclusively to the understanding, in no instance seeking to rouse the passions, and with comparatively few attempts even to appeal to the imagination or interest the feelings.

These sermons are favourable specimens of what has sometimes been called the *middle style* in compositions of this sort; they rarely, if ever, aim at the higher flights of genius; and would, probably, be pronounced, for the most part, better fitted for the press than for the pulpit;—more likely to prove acceptable in the calm sobriety of the closet, than when addressed to the public congregation. It is true, that with the outward graces of an orator, Mr. Foster appears, by the reports of his contemporaries, to have been endowed in a high degree. “His voice,” says one, “was naturally sweet, strong, distinct, harmonious; always adapted to his matter, always varied as his method changed, as expressive of the sense as the most judicious recitative. Monotony was a fault he was never guilty of. His action, the soul of eloquence, was grave, expressive, free from distortion, animated without being theatrical;—in short, such as became the pulpit. He reminded us of St. Paul, at Athens, arresting the attention of his auditors.” But to say nothing of the unpo-

pularity of his theology, it may be doubted whether a preacher who had so little either of matter or of style to please the fancy, to excite the passions, or influence any of the warmer emotions of the soul, let his external accomplishments of action and manner be what they might, would *now* succeed, year after year, in drawing together a crowded auditory. In short, whether the changes in the habits and tastes of the present age, as compared with those of our ancestors a century ago, be in all respects an improvement, we will not undertake to determine; but we cannot help thinking, that a congregation, even among Unitarians, who are generally supposed to be accustomed to a more subdued and merely argumentative style of preaching than most other denominations, if statedly addressed in the style of Foster's sermons, would be sensible of a deficiency in what is commonly called *unction*.

Though Mr. Foster did not frequently deal in what is styled doctrinal, still less in controversial, preaching, which would probably have been little suited to so miscellaneous an audience as he usually addressed, yet he betrays no desire to keep unpopular notions in the shade; there is no unworthy attempt, by the use of ambiguous phrases, to pass off on the unthinking crowd the shadow of pretended orthodoxy, as if it were the substance. And, in several instances, he does not hesitate to take very decided ground on important controverted points of doctrine. Of this we have remarkable examples in his celebrated sermons on Mysteries, and on Heresy and Schism. A mystery, in the scripture sense, he explains to be a fact or doctrine which was revolting to human

prejudices, or not easy to be discovered by human reason, but which, now that it is made known, is perfectly distinct and intelligible; while the belief of propositions which are *still* mysterious, that is, to the terms of which we attach no ideas, is, in its own nature, impossible.

In this sermon is introduced the often-quoted maxim, "Where mystery begins religion ends;"*

* I am indebted to my friend, the Rev. B. Mardon, for a reference to the following passage, in a letter of Lord Bolingbroke to Mr. Pope, in which he refers to this aphorism, and comments on it with high approbation. The extract itself is remarkable, as exemplifying the vacillating, inconsistent state of mind which many unbelievers betray,—often from the influence of early habits of thought and feeling, the results of a religious education, but sometimes, perhaps, from a lingering regard to, and value for, the discoveries and benefits of the Gospel, of which, at times, they cannot divest themselves. Lord Bolingbroke here writes like one who was almost a Christian; or, at least, like one who wished that he could be so.

"I cannot conclude my discourse on this occasion better than by putting you in mind of a passage you quoted to me once with great applause, from a sermon of Foster, to this effect, 'where mystery begins religion ends.' The aphorism pleased me much; and I was glad to hear such a truth from any pulpit, since it shews an inclination at least to purify Christianity from the leaven of artificial theology, which consists principally in making things that are plain mysterious, and in pretending to make things that are impenetrably mysterious very plain. If you still continue of the same mind, I shall have no excuse to make to you for what I have written and shall write. Our opinions coincide. If you have changed your mind, think again and examine further. You will find that it is the modest and not the presumptuous inquirer who makes a real and safe progress in the discovery of divine truth. One follows nature, and nature's God,—that is, he follows God in his works and in his word, nor presumes to go further, by metaphysical and theological commentaries of his own invention, than the two texts, if I may use the expression, carry him very evidently. They who have done otherwise, and have affected to discover, by a supposed science derived from tradition or taught in the schools, more than they who have not such science can discover, concerning the nature, physical and moral, of the Supreme Being, and concern-

which, however, was probably not original in Foster, as it has been quoted, in the same words, from a conversation with Bishop Fleetwood, who died in 1723, before Foster had acquired any distinction as a preacher.*

The sermon on Heresy involved our author in a lengthened controversy with one of the most noted polemics of the day, Dr. Stebbing, Chaplain to his Majesty, and Preacher at Gray's Inn. The text is Titus iii. 10, 11, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself." The term heretic, which occurs here only in the New Testament, denotes, according to our author, one that sets up to be head, or *chooses* to join himself to a particular religious party. When used, therefore, in a bad sense, a heretic must be one who *knowingly* espouses a false doctrine,—is insincere in his profession, and asserts and defends what he is convinced is contrary to Christianity, and, consequently, one who maintains and supports the interest of a faction to serve some base designs. Hence it follows that no mere error of judgment can be heresy. Secondly, That no honest man can be a heretic. Thirdly, That in most cases it is an unwarrantable presumption in those who are not endowed with the gift of discerning spirits to pronounce upon those who differ from them, that they are, in the obnoxious sense of the word, he-

ing the secrets of his providence, have been either enthusiasts or knaves, or else of the numerous tribe who reason well very often, but reason always upon some arbitrary supposition."

* See "Richardsoniana, pp. 333-335, as quoted in Aikin's General Biography, art. Fleetwood.

retics. And, lastly, that the persons who come nearest to the character of heretics, as described by the apostle, are the violent party men who confine Christianity to their own faction, and excommunicate all who differ from them; the rigid imposers of human schemes of doctrine and modes of worship, as essential branches of religion. If it be said that such heretics as are to be rejected may be known by their fruits in the vicious lives they commonly lead, or in their attempts to sow division and excite jealousy and strife, it may be answered, that in that case it were better that they should be rejected for their immorality, which is open and clear, than for their heresy, of which we cannot so readily judge.

Dr. Stebbing's tracts in this controversy, especially his first letter, have quite a sufficient seasoning of supercilious dogmatism, and are replied to by Foster with spirit and acuteness, and, on the whole, with success. But it may be doubted whether a preliminary question has not been overlooked by both parties; how far the apostle's precept was meant to have any general reference whatever beyond the case to which it was immediately applied. The heretic, or fomentor of divisions, whom Titus was to reject, was evidently the Judaizing teacher, who, in opposition to the authority of the apostle, insisted on imposing the ritual law on the Gentile converts. Here was a case which, from its nature, admitted of no difficulty or dispute; but when, without being authorized to do so, we attempt to extend the precept into a general rule for the conduct of the church in all ages, we are immediately at a loss in the practical application of it. There is ano-

ther point not brought prominently forward by either party, in which consists the real root of bitterness in the whole dispute. Dr. Stebbing's argument does not go to vindicate excommunication for heresy, as practised by the English and other established churches, still less the civil disabilities, and other evils of a secular nature, which have been, and still are, to a certain extent, attached to it; all which, though somewhat inconsistently, he distinctly disclaims. He only contends, that every church, (meaning, we presume, according to the definition in the article, "a congregation of faithful men, assembled for the worship of God, and professing faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,") in order to act up to the spirit of the apostle's injunction, *must* exclude from its communion those whom *it believes* to be in pernicious error. As he does not assert for himself or his church the attribute of infallibility, it necessarily follows from hence, and, in fact, he concedes as much of his own accord, that the character of a heretic, as thus determined, is not absolute, but merely relative; "a man may be a heretic to one church who is not so to another, and a heretic to both, who is not so to God." After this concession, it is difficult to see what there is left between the parties which is worth a debate, unless it arise from considerations purely extraneous, namely, from the political and other worldly inconveniences now attached to the imputation of heresy. If a (so called) Christian church were *in reality* nothing more than what we have just defined it to be,—if no communities of any kind existed in the Christian world but "congregations of faithful men," united in such

numbers as were convenient for the purpose of public worship,—there seems no reason why they might not be left to settle their internal constitution in any way they pleased. But when a multitude of such churches are banded together into one great body or sect, either as *established* under the auspices of the state, invested by its authority with rich endowments, political privileges, and a power of interfering with the social rights of their fellow Christians, or as combined on some plan of association, more or less voluntary, into a regularly organized community, whose members seek to exercise lordship over each other, or to engage with other similar bodies in the struggles for sectarian preponderance, the case is wholly altered. The act of exclusion now assumes a new character, because it affects the political rights, the secular interests, or the social position of the excluded party. In such a case it is idle to talk of heresy as being determined by the act of a body so constituted, or of rendering the individual affected by it a heretic. The heresy is *within them*;—it forms an essential part of their own constitution;—it is *they* who are the true heretics, in exact proportion to the degree in which they suffer themselves to be influenced by that evil spirit of sectarianism, which is the bane of the present plan of religious association, and utterly adverse to Christian charity and brotherhood.

In 1744, on the death of the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Hunt, Mr. Foster received an invitation to succeed him in the pastoral charge of the congregation at Pinners' Hall. His connexion with the Baptist society in Barbican, in conjunction with

Mr. Burroughs, had been, on the whole, an harmonious and comfortable one; and, in general liberality of views, they appear to have taken the lead, in some respects, of most of the London Presbyterian churches of that day. Thus we have already had occasion to remark, that this was the only dissenting congregation in London whose ministers thought proper to invite the services of the venerable Emlyn. But to this character there was one exception. They still adhered to the plan of what is called in that connexion *close* communion; restricting the admission to the Lord's table to such only as had received the ordinance of adult baptism, according to the mode of administration approved and practised by themselves. Mr. Foster took the present opportunity of endeavouring to prevail with them to revise this part of their constitution; but they chose to persevere in their exclusive system; a determination in which Mr. Burroughs, the other minister, appears to have concurred.* On this

* Mr. Burroughs's view of this subject seems, however, if we may be allowed to say so, to have been in some respects more liberal than consistent. "As no particular terms of church communion are prescribed in the New Testament, he concluded that every church must be at liberty to fix those terms which it may judge to be most conducive to the main end and design of the Gospel, provided it does not attempt to impose them upon others. He apprehended it expedient that the churches of baptized believers should not admit to their communion any but those who have regularly devoted themselves to Christ in holy baptism at years of maturity. But it was apparent, from his whole conduct, that this did not arise from any narrow or contracted notions, or party-attachments; for he always shewed an equal regard for all sincere Christians, of whatever denomination or sect. And though they could not all communicate at one table, yet he considered them all as being equally members of one and the same body, of which Jesus Christ is the great head."—*Noble's Funeral Sermon for Burroughs*, p. 33.

Mr. Foster withdrew, and removed to Pinners' Hall, where he continued till his increasing infirmities disabled him from preaching. His argument in favour of Catholic or open communion may be seen in a letter addressed to the Rev. W. Foot, of Bristol, some years after this time, a copy of which is inserted in the *Christian Reformer* for February, 1832. After arguing strongly in favour of the practice from the reason of the thing, and the propriety of allowing every man to act upon the conviction of his own mind, on a point in which so many wise and excellent men have differed, he adds, "With respect to the scripture rule, let us but follow the same method that we are always recommending to our Pædobaptist brethren, namely, not to frame *duties* by *inferences*, and to admit of nothing as such without the express command and institution of Christ himself, and this matter will be wholly decided. For then we shall not, I think, imagine we have a sufficient warrant for confining communion to *baptized believers* only, unless we can produce an express rule that none but *they* shall be admitted to communion in any age of the Christian church, however circumstanced; and that all Christians, however sincere, pious, and exemplary in their lives, for only mistaking the nature or subjects of baptism, shall be for ever kept at a distance, and excluded from it. Alas, indeed, if this be true Christianity!"

In the year 1746, Mr. Foster was called upon to perform a melancholy office, in attending on the Earl of Kilmarnock, who was then in the Tower under sentence of death for high-treason, to assist him in preparing for his last moments.

He afterwards published a pamphlet, entitled "An Account of the Behaviour of the late Earl of Kilmarnock, after his Sentence, and on the Day of his Execution." This pamphlet, as might be expected, though abounding with such truly Christian and evangelical reflections as were most suitable to the occasion, was utterly devoid of the enthusiastic extravagances which too commonly deform the narratives given of the last moments of persons in these unhappy circumstances, by the believers in instantaneous conversions, irresistible grace, &c. Hence it exposed him to much ill-natured misrepresentation and abuse, which, however, only reflected discredit upon the authors, though it appears to have agitated and disturbed his tender spirit, rendered, perhaps, more than commonly susceptible by the lively sympathy excited in such a painful attendance. At all events, it was thought that a sensible abatement of his former vivacity was henceforward discernible during the short remainder of his active life.

In 1748 he received the degree of D.D. from the university of Aberdeen. The mode in which this well-merited honour was conferred appears to have been peculiarly complimentary and gratifying. In a letter written on the occasion by Professor David Fordyce, he says, "I am glad that, by our dispatch of what ought to have been dispatched long ago, we prevented Mr. Foster's declining what so well becomes him to receive, and us to confer. I assure you, sincerely, we rather seek to reflect honour on ourselves, than to do you honour, by rightly placing the academical dignity, the principal value of

which is the being at once highly merited and entirely unsolicited. Our society mean, by the just compliment inserted in the body of the diploma,* rather to express their esteem of the *modest preacher*, than to do full justice to his character. For my part, Sir, it gives me a sincere pleasure to have contributed my small mite to do justice to the merit of one who has so often contributed to exalt my devotion, and confirm my attachment to virtue."

In the following year was published the first volume, in 4to, of "Discourses on all the Principal Branches of Natural Religion and Social Virtue." The second volume appeared in 1752. This is a work of unequal merit, but, on the whole, of great interest and value. The parts which are, perhaps, most liable to exception, are those chapters of the first volume, in which he treats of what are commonly called, by way of distinction, the *natural* attributes of the Divine Nature. Abstract reasoning was, probably, not the writer's *forte*; and in this difficult and abstruse part of his subject, he has involved himself in various metaphysical difficulties, which have led him to adopt startling and untenable conclusions. Among these must be ranked his representation of the actions of rational and voluntary agents, as things *absolutely* contingent; whence he is led to deny the prescience, and, consequently, the omniscience of God in its ap-

* — Eâque mente Virum veré egregium *Jacobum Foster*, dignum Evangelio Ministrum Ingenio, Doctrinâ, Eloquentiâ insignem, Virtutis ac Veritatis Amicum, Libertatis, tam Civilis quam Christianæ Vindicem, Vitâque quam Scriptis, probatissimis licet, clariorem, insigni honoris titulo promeritis decorare volentes, S.S. Theologiæ Doctorem creavimus, &c.

plication to the most important objects of the Divine Government, for whose sake alone it is of any importance to us to acknowledge a Providence at all,—namely, the actions, and future condition as dependent upon them, of intelligent and moral creatures. The view of the *moral* attributes is much superior;—the chapter on the mercy or placability of God, in particular, contains as distinct and satisfactory a view of the argument on this most interesting question as is any where to be met with. The second volume is chiefly occupied with a view of the various departments of human duty, as arising out of the different relations of the social state, and, without containing much that is new or original, which, perhaps, was hardly to be expected from the nature of the subject, is most remarkable for sound good sense, plainly and perspicuously stated. The offices of devotion, at the end of the volume, afford an interesting and pleasing indication of the devotional character of the writer's mind, and of the extent to which he was accustomed to carry that most desirable habit of converting every train of thought or study in which he was engaged into a subject and occasion of devout meditation and communion with his Maker. Considered in the character for which they appear to have been intended, as forms for social worship, they are, perhaps, sometimes too long, and dwell with too great diffuseness and prolixity on particular topics; but as serious and solemn meditations on some of the most important subjects on which the human faculties can be engaged, thrown into the impressive form of a direct address to Him who gave us these faculties to be

so exercised on thoughts and inquiries most truly worthy of them, they well deserve to be not only read, but carefully studied.

One blot which deforms this part of the work we would gladly efface,—an invocation of the Divine displeasure against the Church of Rome, conceived in terms hardly consistent with the spirit of the Gospel of peace, especially against those whom he was bound, in conformity with his own most just and liberal principles, to receive as fellow-disciples and fellow-Christians. In passing judgment, however, on this, and some other passages of a like character which are found in his writings, we must remember that Foster lived a hundred years nearer than ourselves to the time when Popery was, not without reason, the grand object of alarm and dread to all lovers of civil and religious liberty, and make allowance for the prevailing spirit of the age, of which, though such spirits as his might be expected to take the lead, they could not always escape the influence.

This work was published by subscription, and the list of subscribers, extending to nearly two thousand names, comprises many of the most distinguished persons in the kingdom for rank, and every kind of eminence; a circumstance the more remarkable, because the author, in this as in most of his other writings, though he does not bring his religious peculiarities frequently or prominently forward, neglects no suitable opportunity of illustrating the intimate connexion of the duties and eternal interests of man with what he considers as just and scriptural views of revealed truth.

In April 1750, Dr. Foster was attacked by a violent disorder, from the effects of which he never thoroughly recovered, though he continued to preach as often as he was able till January 1752. In that month he had a paralytic seizure, which completely disabled him; and he continued to decline, till he was at length released Nov. 5, 1753, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. During this period his faculties are said to have been considerably impaired; but he never, when he was able to converse, evinced the least disposition to doubt the religious principles he had embraced and steadfastly maintained as long as his mental vigour endured. His integrity was inflexible, and his attachment to civil and religious liberty ardent and sincere. The true principles of the latter, (with the slight exception to which we have already alluded,) he seems to have thoroughly understood, and consistently acted upon; and, while fearlessly pursuing his inquiries into religious truth to their legitimate conclusions, never to have forgotten that the main object and value of these conclusions consists in their application to the government of the heart and life, and to the due cultivation of the purest and best affections—of love to man, and love to God.

Dr. Foster was succeeded in his charge at Barbican by the Rev. Charles Bulkley, a gentleman of great learning, and known by several valuable works, few of which, however, have attracted as much notice from the public as their intrinsic merit deserves. He was a descendant of the celebrated Matthew Henry, and was educated by Doddridge; but shortly afterwards connected him-

self with the General Baptists. When Foster retired from the evening lectureship at the Old Jewry, Mr. Bulkley conducted it for several years to a crowded audience; but circumstances did not favour his continuance of it for any length of time.

One of this writer's most remarkable productions is a vindication of Lord Shaftesbury on the subject of Ridicule considered as a Test of Truth; the design of which is to prove that the noble author meant nothing else than the test of free and cheerful inquiry, or an unrestrained, sociable, and pleasant manner of investigating truth and examining opinions which he had observed with such approbation in the writings of the ancients. In the course of this, and a subsequent tract entitled a Vindication of my Lord Shaftesbury on the subjects of Morality and Religion, he endeavours to shew that many of the sentiments which have been objected to, as opposed to revelation, are the true and genuine doctrines of Christianity; and that where he is supposed to sneer at the miracles of the New Testament, the real objects of his attack are the lying wonders and ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church of Rome.

Soon afterwards he published an able Examination of Lord Bolingbroke's posthumous writings. This work shews great acuteness, perspicuity, and judgment, and is conceived throughout in a candid and liberal spirit. In 1764, Mr. B. published a 4to volume, entitled "The Economy of the Gospel," in which he takes a comprehensive view of the leading doctrines of revealed religion. This is a work of considerable merit; the production of a strong mind, under the influence of

the purest principles of benevolence and piety. In 1771 appeared Discourses on the Parables of our Blessed Saviour, and the Miracles of the Holy Gospel, in four volumes 8vo.

Besides these larger works, Mr. Bulkley published several smaller treatises and single discourses. In 1780, his church, in conjunction with three others, removed to a new chapel in Worship Street, where he continued during the remainder of his long and active life. He died April 15, 1797, in the 78th year of his age. In 1802 appeared a posthumous work, entitled "Notes on the Bible," in three volumes, with a Memoir by Dr. Toulmin, from which the preceding particulars have been derived.

GEORGE BENSON

Was descended from a good family, who resided at Great Salkeld, in the county of Cumberland, where he was born September 1, 1699. His parents were pious, worthy persons, and zealous Nonconformists, having suffered considerably in this cause in the troubled times of the preceding generation; and they had the satisfaction to see several of a numerous family grow up and distinguish themselves not only in support of the same principles, but in the graces of a Christian life. George Benson was soon remarked for a seriousness of temper, and a disposition to study, which induced his parents to devote him to the Christian ministry; and for this purpose, after having passed through the usual course of grammar learning, he was sent to the academy kept by Dr. Dixon, of Whitehaven, already mentioned as having had the honour to number Taylor of Norwich, among its *alumni*. Here, however, he continued only about a year, after which he removed to the University of Glasgow. His family appear to have been orthodox, and he himself was brought up in Calvinistic principles, which, however, he abandoned at an early period in the course of his preparatory studies. Indeed, he does not appear at any time to have considered himself as bound down to the profession of a system of human formation, but to have endeavoured, from the first, to derive his religious principles from the scrip-

ture, and from that alone. It was this peculiarity in their constitution and practice, which induced him to take up his lot among those who have been called the liberal dissenters, that they neither confined themselves, nor attempted to impose fetters upon others, but endeavoured to pursue truth with perfect freedom, fairness, and impartiality, in whatever quarter it might appear to lie. May this true liberality ever continue to characterize their descendants! and may a time at length arrive, when other denominations shall perceive more clearly the genuine Protestant principle, that the Bible is the only proper standard of religious truth, and no longer attempt either to apply or to impose any other!*

The question of predestination, in particular, appeared to require a careful settlement in the first place, not only in order that he might govern his own conduct accordingly, but because it appeared to him scarcely reasonable to address the motives of religion, and the language of exhortation and instruction, to those who were chained down to one course of action by an irreversible decree. The views upon this subject, which he then adopted, are distinctly stated in a "Review of Predestination," in which he endeavours to shew that the scriptural expressions commonly supposed to favour the notion of "decrees," are a figurative application of language adopted from the proceedings of human monarchs, who are accustomed to deliberate in their secret councils on the more important transactions of their govern-

* Not that we would have them attempt to *impose* even that. In this, as in all other respects, let every man be fully persuaded in *his own* mind.

ment, and to issue decrees, doubtless intended at the time, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, to be unchangeable. But previous consultations and subsequent resolutions and decrees are only needed where the ideas are limited and successive; defects or imperfections by no means to be ascribed to the all-perfect Deity. The popular language of scripture, however, is founded on this supposition, in order to give such an impression as the human mind, especially at that early stage of its development to which the Scripture history chiefly refers, can most readily comprehend of the wisdom and steadiness of the course of Divine Providence.

About the close of the year 1721, Mr. Benson came to London, and having been examined and approved by several of the most eminent Presbyterian ministers, he began to preach, first at Chertsey, and afterwards in London. By the recommendation of Dr. Calamy, he afterwards went to Abingdon, in Berkshire, and settled as minister of a dissenting congregation there, with whom he continued for seven years, diligently employed in studying the sacred writings, and labouring to instruct and improve the people under his care. During his stay at Abingdon, he preached and published three serious practical discourses, addressed to young people, which were well received. But of these he afterwards forbade the reprinting, as containing views of some disputed doctrines which did not accord with his more matured opinions. Here he also published a "Defence of the Reasonableness of Prayer, in a Letter to a Friend;" in which he discusses with great judgment the common phi-

losophical objections, and establishes the duty as well as the efficacy of prayer, upon plain and Christian principles. To this is added, a translation of a discourse of Maximus Tyrius on prayer, with remarks upon it. He shews that prayer, as a natural expression of our sense of the perfections and providence of God, of our dependence on him and obligations to him, and of our concern for moral improvement, is a rational and advantageous exercise of the mind, and may with reason be expected to procure favours from God; not by working a change in the Deity, who will always do what is best; but by producing such a change for the better in man, as will render it best and fittest for the Deity to distinguish the pious and humble suppliant with instances of his particular favour.

In 1726 he married Mrs. Elizabeth Hills, widow, with whom he lived very happily for fourteen years. In 1729 he received and accepted an invitation to become minister of a congregation in King John's Court, Southwark, the duties of which station he discharged with great acceptance and satisfaction for eleven years.

The admirable success which had attended Mr. Locke's endeavours to apply the principles of just and rational interpretation in his excellent commentary on five of St. Paul's Epistles, had often inspired a wish that some person similarly qualified would continue the work on a similar plan, and in the same enlightened and liberal spirit. We have already seen that Mr. Peirce, in the latter part of his life, entered upon this labour, and gave to the world an exposition of the Epistles to the Colossians and Philippians,

with part of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which last, being left unfinished at the author's decease, was completed by Mr. Hallet.

In 1731, Mr. Benson proposed to himself to carry on this important work, and commenced with a "Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to Philemon, attempted in imitation of Mr. Locke's manner;" with an Appendix, in which it is shewn, by manifest indications derived from this short epistle, that St. Paul was neither an enthusiast nor an impostor, and that, consequently, the Christian religion must be, as he has represented it, heavenly and divine. This specimen was so favourably received, that the author was encouraged to proceed with his plan, and shortly afterwards brought out a Paraphrase and Notes on the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. The second epistle appeared in the following year, accompanied by two dissertations on the Kingdom of God, and on the "Man of Sin," spoken of 2 Thess. ii. 3—12. In this latter discourse, he states the usual Protestant exposition of this remarkable prophecy with great clearness and ability; and, probably, his argument is just, as far as it goes. Certainly, the particulars enumerated are so closely applicable to the peculiarities of the Church of Rome, that every person who reads the passage with attention and candour must see the propriety of the application. At the same time, it is observable, on the one hand, that there were other corruptions, both in respect of doctrine, discipline, and practice, much more closely impending, and in which it is reasonable to suppose that the Thessalonians would take a nearer, indeed a personal, interest,—and, on the other,

that if we extend our views of its application to more distant ages, it is difficult to perceive why the Apostle should be supposed to limit himself to a denunciation of the apostacy and corruption which prevailed in one portion of the Christian world, when it is but too manifest that the same principles and the same antichristian spirit have prevailed, and exercised a most pernicious influence in almost every age, country, and denomination of professing Christians. Wherever any form of Christianity has been established by the interference and patronage of the civil power, we have commonly seen too clear indications of the disposition to assume unholy dominion, and to lord it over the consciences of men, which is here characterized under the figurative expression of "the man of sin." The spirit of intolerance and persecution was little less conspicuous in the ranks of the reformers than among the adherents of the Romish church, and led to the same dreadful excesses and flagrant violations of the law of Christ, in a narrower sphere and to a less extent, only because their power and their opportunities of exercising it were more limited. We may hope, however, that this spirit is in a great measure abated, and that few would now be found to hesitate in receiving the admonition with which our author concludes: "Let us ever take care to watch against a persecuting spirit, in all the branches and degrees of it, and to lay the great stress of religion where the scriptures of the New Testament have laid it,—not in abstruse notions and unintelligible subtleties,—not in forms and ceremonies, or an empty profession of the best and purest religion; but in the sincere love of

God and one another,—in a due governing of our passions and sensual appetites, and the habitual practice of universal holiness. For what signifies it what church any man belongs to, what profession of religion he makes, or what advantages he enjoys, if he doth not love God, and keep his commandments? If he abuses his liberty to licentiousness, and in the midst of such marvellous light shews that he prefers darkness, by leading a scandalous and wicked life, which, of all others, is the blackest heresy, and the most flagrant and notorious corruption and apostacy?"

This dissertation was afterwards published in a separate form, in a small volume, entitled "A Collection of Tracts;" comprising also the letter concerning the design and end of prayer, the review of predestination, and a brief account of the persecution and death of Servetus, originally inserted in the weekly paper called the *Old Whig*, or *Consistent Protestant*; a publication to which several other eminent dissenters of that day were occasional contributors. To these were added, in a later edition, a defence of the "Brief Account," a Narrative of the cruel treatment of Dr. Leighton, by Archbishop Laud, and an ingenious Essay on the Belief of Things which are above Reason. This last contains as distinct and satisfactory a statement of the argument for the rational opinion on this subject as is any where to be met with in so small a compass.

In 1733 appeared the Paraphrase and Notes on the first Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, which were followed in the succeeding year by the second Epistle to Timothy; thus completing, when taken in connexion with the pre-

vious labours of Locke and Peirce, the entire series of St. Paul's writings. To these were added dissertations on inspiration,—on the abolition of the ceremonial part of the Mosaic law, and on the settlement of the primitive church. Our author's account of the inspiration of the scriptures, (at least of the Christian scriptures,) coincides nearly with that afterwards advanced by Michaelis in his Introduction to the New Testament; assuming that the apostles, and they alone, were so far furnished with a full and complete scheme of what they were to teach concerning the Christian doctrine, as to be empowered to authenticate any writing, or give it a title to rank as canonical Christian scripture. If this be the proper criterion of an inspired writing, it becomes necessary, in order to establish the authority of two of the Gospels, to assume that Mark gives, in fact, the testimony of St. Peter, with whom he is understood to have been chiefly connected, and that Luke's narrative is confirmed by the apostolic authority of St. Paul. These assumptions may by some be thought somewhat arbitrary and gratuitous; and it may not appear very obvious why it should be considered necessary to seek for any other authority, in the Gospel of Luke for example, than that to which he himself lays claim, when he tells us, that "it seemed good to him also, having traced every thing from the first exactly, to set forth in order a narrative, that his friend might know the truth of those things wherein he had been instructed." Our author's good sense, at the same time, shews him the folly of ascribing divine inspiration to every passing remark or illustration which occurs

in the epistles. It is enough if we receive the great truths and facts on which the Christian system is raised in reliance on their testimony, and the doctrines or conclusions which they professedly teach on apostolic authority, without attempting to ascribe to inspiration that which any man might as well say or do without it. With respect to the abolition of the ceremonial law, his opinion is, that while the Jewish Christians, like all others, remained universally and every where bound by the *moral* law, those resident in Judæa, and they *only*, were bound by the political or judicial part of the Mosaic law, which was, in fact, a part of the civil constitution of the state to which they belonged; but that from the *ritual* part, whether at home or abroad, they were *de jure* absolved, immediately upon their embracing Christianity. If, nevertheless, they continued to observe it, this was partly owing to the influence of their own prejudices, “zealous for the law,” and strongly attached to the religious peculiarities of their nation, and partly to a desire not unnecessarily to offend the prejudices of others, which might occasionally lead them with St. Paul, in things not sinful, to become all things to all men, that by any means they might gain some.

In his view of the early settlement of the Christian church, it appears that Mr. Benson availed himself considerably of the observations thrown out by Lord Barrington in his *Miscellanea Sacra*, and particularly of the distinct account given by him of the *gifts of the Spirit*, by which the apostles and first preachers of Christianity were enabled to spread and confirm the Gospel. His lordship and Mr. Benson frequently corre-

sponded on the subject of Scripture criticism; and how favourable an opinion that noble writer formed of our author's paraphrase and notes, appears from a letter of his to Mr. Benson, written in November 1734:—"I received the favour of your second Epistle to Timothy, and have looked it carefully over; and can now return you my thanks for the kind present you have made, and for the instruction I have received from it at the same time. The 'History of the State of Things, &c.' is very full and clear. The Synopsis, short and comprehensive. The full meaning of the Apostle seems every where to be pursued in the paraphrase and notes. Many of them are what I have not met with in other critics and commentators, and are at the same time extremely well supported. The two essays are very accurate, and of great importance towards letting us into the true state of things in those times, relating to the planting and settling of the churches, and the exercise of the spiritual gifts. There is but little in which I can differ from you."

Of this work, taken as a whole, it is not, perhaps, too much to say, and it is a high commendation, that it is not unworthy to be ranked as a sequel to the labours of Locke and Peirce. It immediately placed the author's name at a high point in the catalogue of liberal, rational, and learned theologians—a station which he did not forfeit by his later writings.

In 1735, Mr. Benson published the History of the first planting of the Christian Religion, taken from the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles, together with the remarkable facts of the Jewish and Roman history which affected the Christians

within this period. "In this work," says Dr. Amory,* "besides illustrating throughout the history of the Acts and most of the Epistles by a view of the history of the times, the occasion of the several epistles, and the state of the churches to whom they were addressed, he hath established the truth of the Christian religion on a number of facts, the most public, important, and incontestable, the relation of which we have from eye-witnesses of unquestionable integrity, and which produced such great and extensive alterations in the moral and religious state of the world, as cannot be rationally accounted for without admitting the reality of these facts and the truth of these relations."

In the preface to a later edition of this work, the author expresses himself as follows:—"If I had believed Christianity to be false, no worldly considerations whatever could have induced me to have wrote so much to make the world believe that it is true. And if it be true, it is not an indifferent matter whether men receive or reject it. As for my own part, I have studied the books of Scripture, and more especially the New Testament, for above thirty years. From thence I have taken my notions of Christianity, and of the evidence of it. I have read the objections of the infidels, and have found that their acquaintance with the Scriptures is but very superficial; that they have no steady principles of their own; and that their design is to pull down Christianity, without giving the world any other scheme of religion or morals instead of it. I am, indeed, convinced

* Memoir, prefixed to the "Life of Christ," p. xi.

that the anti-revelationists are, in general, unfair writers, and have no good views; yet I am very thankful that this controversy has broke out and been carried on to such a length in my time; because I should otherwise never have seen the objections placed in so strong a light, nor cleared up so fully, and to such rational satisfaction. I should never have understood my Bible so well; never have seen the arguments for the divine original of it placed in such a variety of views; nor have apprehended the evidences to have been so very strong, extensive, and numerous.

“ I have with great pleasure observed, that many things against which the enemies of Revelation have objected, have, upon a more narrow inspection, turned out beauties instead of blemishes, and arguments in favour of Christianity instead of objections against it. And I am not without hope, that the writers who have of late so openly and in such great numbers appeared against revelation, are paving the way for a more general and extensive spread of it. For if Christians of different denominations would but give up what they cannot rationally defend, and return to the Scriptures as the sole standard of revealed religion, then would Christianity, pure uncorrupted Christianity, appear in its genuine simplicity and native excellence. Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans, would be struck with the amiable nature and abundant evidence of it, and well-minded Deists be induced to admire and embrace it.

“ After repeated examination, I am persuaded that the Christian religion, as it lies uncorrupted in the Scriptures, is of divine original. And the

more I have examined into the nature and evidence of it, the more I am convinced of the divine mission of Jesus and of the truth of the Gospel."

In 1740, Mr. Benson was chosen pastor of the congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Crutched Friars, on the death of Dr. William Harris, in which situation he remained for the rest of his active life. For some years (as has already been stated) he was associated in this charge with the celebrated Dr. Lardner, until that eminent theologian and true Christian was induced by his increasing deafness and other infirmities, which, in his opinion, incapacitated him for the service of the public congregation, to withdraw from the pulpit, and devote himself entirely to those labours of the study and of the pen, in the results of which the Christian world has so largely partaken, and will ever continue to partake.

Both during their official connexion, and ever after, these two eminent men continued in the greatest harmony and friendship, notwithstanding a slight difference in their views on some minor points of theological criticism, as well as on some doctrinal questions; Benson being an Arian, while Lardner was a believer in the simple humanity of Christ. By their friendly communication they mutually contributed to the improvement of each other's productions; and it is stated by our author's biographer, Dr. Amory, that, if the correspondence between them upon these subjects were published, the freedom and politeness with which they debated several points wherein they differed, would prove a good specimen of the proper spirit and manner of conducting such dis-

cussions. They were neither of them bound by any pledge to abide by the dogmas or to support at all hazards the interests of any sect or party, and had no personal views of their own which could be forwarded by their espousing one side rather than the other of any controverted questions; or, if they had, their minds were superior to all such unworthy considerations. Truth, and truth only, was the object of their joint pursuit; and they were happily exempted from the influence of all temptations which worldly interests of any kind might have thrown in their way to hesitate in following her footsteps wherever they appeared to lead. These are privileges cheaply purchased by an exclusion from the emoluments and honours of the establishment, or from that sort of popularity which can be acquired by going along with the multitude. Those who succeed them in the privileges as well as the privations (so far as any minor inconveniences they are exposed to deserve that name) of this lot, will, we trust, ever shew themselves ready to meet the one, and avail themselves of the other, in the same honest, manly, and independent spirit; improving both, so as to render them instrumental to their progress in religious knowledge and all other graces of the Christian character. Whatever difficulties or discouragements in other ways they may have to encounter, may they ever be thankful to a kind Providence, which has protected them from many snares and perils with which others have to contend in the full exercise of that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free!

In 1742, Mr. Benson was a second time married,

to Mary, daughter of Mr. William Kettle, of Birmingham; at which place he some time afterwards declined an invitation to settle, as colleague with Mr. Bourn in the pastoral charge of the "New Meeting," since served by Priestley, Toulmin, and other eminent men.

In 1743 appeared "The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures." The more immediate object of this work was to refute a well-known deistical publication which was then recent, entitled "Christianity not founded on Argument;" the writer of which had somewhat insidiously taken advantage of the disposition of some advocates of revelation to decry reason altogether in matters of religion, and to consider it as exclusively addressed to the affections and feelings. The fair inference from which seemed to be, that the Gospel, which did not address itself to the understanding, was unfit to stand in an appeal to the tribunal of reason, or to endure the test of a rigid and impartial examination.

This treatise is drawn up in the form of dialogue, and the argument on the side of revelation is, on the whole, ably and well managed, though it is certainly open to the usual objection to controversial works written on this plan, that the opponent is too commonly a mere man of straw, and is very far from giving such a view of his own case as any *real* opponent would be satisfied with. All readers, except the most careless or prejudiced, are sure to be struck with this; and the consequence of such one-sided *ex parte* statements is apt to be a reaction in the mind of the reader, who has no means of rightly estimating how much of the real strength of the opponent's

cause is kept back by his not having an opportunity of actually answering for himself. No man, however honest or candid, can be relied upon for giving such an account of the arguments which do not convince himself, as will or ought to satisfy either an opponent or the public.

In 1746, Mr. Benson received the degree of D.D. from the University of Aberdeen, which at that period, apparently in part through the influence of Mr. David Fordyce, shewed a frequent disposition to bestow this academical compliment on the leading divines of the liberal school among the English dissenters. It appears, from a letter written to Dr. Benson by Mr. Fordyce, that there had been a design to send him a diploma from the University of Glasgow; (his own Alma Mater;) but an opposition was made to this, because some persons there considered him as *unsound*; and one of the members of the university, when the scheme was mentioned, "spoke of him with abhorrence as an avowed Socinian." This was a mistake; for Dr. Benson never went beyond Arianism: but theological calumniators, when their object is to excite prejudice, are ready enough to select the epithet which appears best suited for their purpose, without being over-nice in their inquiries about its correctness.

The success which had attended our author's labours on St. Paul's Epistles, and the favourable reception they had met with from the learned world, encouraged him to proceed in applying the same method to the seven commonly called Catholic Epistles. His commentaries on these appeared at different periods between the years 1738 and 1749. The paraphrase and notes are framed on

the same plan as before; and several valuable critical dissertations are added, particularly an Essay to reconcile the doctrine of the Apostles Paul and James on the subject of Justification by Faith; in which he shews that, by "the works of the law," St. Paul meant the ritual law of Moses, by the most diligent and scrupulous observance of which he declares that no flesh living can be justified. The subjects of the other dissertations are, an examination of what is meant by Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison (1 Peter iii. 19); on the text of the three heavenly witnesses (1 John, v. 7); and on the distinction between the sin unto death and the sin not unto death (1 John v. 16).

This work was also well received, and a second edition of the whole appeared in 1756, with some additional dissertations.

His valuable contributions to sacred literature procured for our author the friendship and esteem of many persons of the highest eminence in the Established Church as well as among the Dissenters. On the Continent also they enjoyed a high reputation; and the Exposition of St. James's Epistle had the honour of being translated into Latin by the celebrated J. D. Michaelis, who had proposed to translate the entire work, but was prevented by other engagements.

These extensive critical labours on the Christian Scriptures did not prevent Dr. Benson from devoting himself diligently to the performance of his duties as a preacher and pastor. On the contrary, circumstanced as he was, we may naturally conclude that the two occupations would materially favour and facilitate each other. The scripture critic, who is at the same time engaged in

the important office of a Christian minister, will be less in danger of pursuing his work, as some may perhaps have done, merely as a business of scholarship and literary research; while, earnestly desirous to bring all the aids of learning and critical acuteness which he can command to illustrate its beauties, enforce its arguments, trace its allusions, and explain its occasional obscurities, he will ever remember that the main end and purpose of his labour in commenting on the word of God, is to promote its practical efficacy in improving the hearts and lives of those to whom it is addressed. On the other hand, in common with many others who have enjoyed similar advantages, Dr. Benson was, happily, under no temptation to abandon the character of a critic and theologian in his preparation for the pulpit; to keep back from his people the result of his inquiries in the closet, or to veil them, as some have done, in obscure and ambiguous language, in order to maintain a delusive reputation for what is called orthodoxy. As he had laid himself under no obligations to adhere through life to a certain specified formula of man's construction, so his hearers were ready to grant him the liberty which they used themselves, and to receive with candour his unreserved communications of what appeared to him to be the truth as it is in Jesus.

Of Dr. Benson's manner as a preacher, his biographers have left us no account. The character of his style in his other compositions, correct and perspicuous, but perfectly plain, and devoid of studied ornament or appeals to the passions, leads us to conclude that he did not aim at the reputation of a popular preacher; and his con-

gregation was small, though select and highly intelligent. "His natural temper (says Dr. Amory) prevented his excelling in a warm and pathetic address to the passions of his hearers. But this he endeavoured to compensate by the evidence and seriousness with which he recommended, from the Scriptures, universal piety, righteousness, and holiness of heart and life, and the necessity of acquiring and practising these; shewing the danger of trusting to any other expedients for obtaining the favour of God, and the blessedness of heaven, without personal holiness and obedience. A method of preaching not improper for convincing, converting, and edifying the hearers, especially when enforced by a suitable practice." (Memoir, p. xiii.)

In 1747, Dr. Benson printed a volume of "Sermons on several important Subjects." A letter which he received from Dr. Herring, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, in acknowledgment of a presentation copy, accompanied with congratulations on his recent elevation to the primacy, has been preserved, and merits insertion, as a model of that liberal and truly Christian spirit which we could wish to find in all stations, and more especially in one of such high dignity and extensive influence.

"Reverend Sir,—I cannot satisfy myself with having sent a cold and common answer of thanks for your volume of most excellent and useful sermons. I do it in this manner with great esteem and cordiality. I thank you at the same time, as becomes me to do, for your very obliging good wishes. The subject on which my friends con-

gratulate me is, in truth, matter of constant anxiety to me. I hope I have an honest intention; and, for the rest, I must rely on the good grace of God, and the counsel and assistance of my friends.

“ I think it happy that I am called up to this high station at a time when spite and rancour and narrowness of spirit are out of countenance; when we breathe the benign and comfortable air of liberty and toleration; and the teachers of our common religion make it their business to extend its essential influence, and join in supporting its true interest and honour. No times ever called more loudly upon Protestants for zeal, and unity, and charity.

“ I am, Rev. Sir, your assured friend,
“ THOMAS CANTUAR.”

Another letter, in the same spirit, from the author's namesake, Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, is given by Dr. Amory, and is inserted here, as illustrating the sort of intercourse which was *then* permitted between church dignitaries and dissenting ministers of eminence.

“ Berry Street, Westminster,
Jan. 10, 1749.

“ Sir,—I received, at my coming to town upon Saturday last, what you are pleased to style a small, but must allow me to esteem a very valuable, present,—your Paraphrase and Notes on the seven Catholic Epistles. I have not yet had time to peruse them; but I could not, till I had, delay to return my thanks for the great favour which you have done me, and to which I wish I could

think myself entitled upon any of the other accounts you mention, besides that only, of wearing a name to which you, by your learning, have done honour.

“ I can only say for myself, that I have a sincere desire to do all the good which my abilities will capacitate me for in the station in which it has pleased Providence to place me; and a sincere delight to see virtue and religion defended in an age which so much wants it by able hands. And no one can be more ready than myself to acknowledge how much, upon this account, we are indebted to the learned labours and admirable writings of several of those whom we have the unhappiness to have differing from us in less important particulars.

“ I beg of God to bless your and their labours for his service, and to unite us all in love and charity here, and glory hereafter. And yourself I beg, with much regard, to believe me to be,

“ Sir,

“ Your faithful and much obliged humble servant,

“ M. GLOCESTER.”

We may add to the author's friends and occasional correspondents among distinguished churchmen, *Hoadley*, *Butler*, and *Law*,—names which may rather be said to confer honour on the elevated stations to which they were raised, than to receive honour from them. In the list of subscribers to Dr. Benson's posthumous *History of the Life of Christ*, we also observe the Bishops of Lichfield and Worcester; Shute Barrington, afterwards Bishop of Durham; Newcome, then Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford, afterwards

Archbishop of Armagh; figuring along with Lardner, Fleming, Kippis, Price, and many other "*Reverends by courtesy*" of that day, but as good bishops as themselves notwithstanding. When, however, we contrast these things with the strange outcry which has recently been excited, when two bishops subscribed to a volume of sermons published by a Unitarian minister, we are constrained to acknowledge our apprehension that, in some respects, the former times were better than these.

In the year 1754, Dr. Benson published a Summary of the Evidences of Christ's Resurrection, in which he reduces the accounts given by the four Evangelists into one harmonized narrative; and examines, with great ability and acuteness, the objections which have been proposed by unbelievers against this part of the Gospel history. In particular, he illustrates very satisfactorily the important inference from the diversity of these narratives, that it clearly appears from hence that we cannot have here a concerted story, but the testimony of four really independent witnesses, who relate the event as such witnesses may be expected to do, dwelling more particularly some upon one portion of the history, some upon another, while circumstances minutely related by one are altogether passed over by the rest. It is well known that this is a subject which has exercised the ingenuity of various writers, who have adopted different hypotheses, some more, some less probable. Dr. Benson's mode of combining the accounts proceeds on the supposition that Mary Magdalene and the other women, after going *together* to the sepulchre the

first time, very early in the morning, separated on their return after seeing the angels and the stone rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre; that Mary Magdalene went to inform Peter and John, while the other women announced what had happened to the rest of the apostles;—and that, afterwards, both parties again visited the sepulchre, at which time they had their respective interviews with our Lord. The Monthly Reviewers characterize this tract, in their notice of its first appearance, in the following terms:—“The reader will here find a more clear and satisfactory view of this subject, and that in a much narrower compass than is any where else to be met with.”

Dr. Benson's station and well-deserved eminence and reputation, both as a divine and a man of letters, not only afforded him an opportunity of enjoying for himself the full practical benefit of religious liberty and free inquiry, but enabled him to encourage and assist young aspirants in the same honourable course, especially when labouring under difficulties arising from the opposition or jealousy of persons with less enlarged and liberal views. Several of those who in a later age became eminent lights of the church, had to acknowledge the kindness and assistance of Dr. Benson, as in other ways, so likewise in the direction of their private studies. For several years he had one or more residing with him, who, having finished their university or academical education, were desirous of obtaining, under his direction, a more critical acquaintance with the sacred writings. One of these was the well-known Dr. Macknight, author of a Harmony of

the Gospels, a New Translation of the Epistles, &c. Another, less known to fame, but not less worthy, though the shortness of his mortal career did not afford him the opportunity of acquiring such extensive reputation, was Mr. John Alexander, of Birmingham, who is mentioned by Dr. Priestley, in his Memoirs, as his favourite fellow-student, and a young man of very high and distinguished attainments. He died in 1765, in the 30th year of his age. He published nothing in his lifetime, except a few contributions to the periodicals of the day; but he left behind him a very valuable Paraphrase on the fifteenth Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which, with some other pieces, was published after his death by the Rev. John Palmer.

During the latter years of his life, Dr. Benson appeared less frequently before the public. Indeed, his health was latterly much impaired; and he found it necessary, at length, to quit the public exercise of the ministry in the beginning of the year 1762. It was the hope of his friends that his life might have been prolonged in a peaceful retirement for the further prosecution of his theological pursuits and the pleasing intercourse of society. But his strength declined rapidly, and on the 6th of April, 1762, in the sixty-third year of his age, he was called away from the scene of his earthly labours.

Dr. Benson was not a man of brilliant genius, but of sound learning, unwearied diligence, and a truly liberal, enlightened, and Christian spirit. He was a thoroughly consistent Protestant dissenter, on the only grounds on which either Protestantism or Dissent can be successfully vindicated.

cated, namely, the sole authority of Christ as head over all things to his church, the sufficiency of the scriptures as a rule of faith, and the right of individual inquiry and judgment. This right he claimed for himself, and was ever ready to concede to others. "As a minister of the Gospel of Christ,* he studied the scriptures with indefatigable attention, and explained them with freedom and impartiality. As a friend, he always exercised to others what he expected from them—a generous plainness and freedom, void of all dissimulation and hypocrisy. While he was candid to the opinions of others, he was stedfast in his own, for he entertained no sentiments which had not cost him a long and conscientious examination. As a preacher, he preferred those points in which all Christians agree before those in which they differ; and instead of urging matters of doubtful disputation, he enforced the grand duties of practical religion, as being of absolute and eternal importance."

Dr. Benson left in manuscript a History of the Life of Jesus Christ, taken from the New Testament; with Observations and Reflections proper to illustrate the excellence of his character, and the divinity of his mission and religion. This work was published by subscription after his death, in one large volume in 4to. Though, perhaps, in some places unnecessarily diffuse, and containing some doctrinal views which are open to objection, it forms, on the whole, a very valuable contribution to our stock of practical divinity. The reflections are chiefly of a popular cast, and

* Radcliff's Funeral Sermon for Dr. Benson, p. 30.

well adapted, for the most part, to suggest the most desirable practical improvement to be derived from meditating on the events of our Lord's life, and the leading features of his character. They also furnish satisfactory answers to many of the most plausible and frequently urged objections which are likely to fall in the way of the general reader. In this point of view, the chapter on miracles, and that on the resurrection, which is a reprint of the dissertation already mentioned, are particularly valuable and judicious. To this volume is prefixed a memoir of the author, by Dr. Amory, the editor, from which the materials of the preceding article have been chiefly derived.

JOHN SHUTE,

Afterwards *Viscount Barrington*, was born in 1678, at Theobalds, in Hertfordshire. He was the third son of Benjamin Shute, an eminent merchant, and was descended from an ancient family of considerable note, some of whom had in later years been more worthily distinguished by their attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty. His immediate ancestors were connected with the Nonconformists in the period of their adversity, and he himself was trained up in an early adherence to the same cause. At sixteen, according to the custom which we have already seen was very prevalent among the more educated class of Dissenters of that period, he was sent to pursue his studies in the university of Utrecht, where he speedily distinguished himself by his proficiency in classical literature, and in the other prevailing studies of the place, particularly those of civil law and theology. Some of his academical disputations appear to have been printed at the time, and have since been cited with marked commendation by several writers of high name and authority on the subjects to which they related.

After studying four years at Utrecht, Mr. Shute returned to England, and entered himself a student of the Inner Temple, with a view to the legal profession. He was not, however, so absorbed in his preparations for this object as not

to take an interest in the affairs of the religious body to which he belonged. He soon began to take an active part in the controversy between the Church and the Dissenters, and in 1701 published a pamphlet, but without his name, entitled, "The Interest of England, in respect to Protestants dissenting from the established Church." In this pamphlet he dwelt on the rights of the Dissenters, to a full toleration; and argued the question on those enlarged and general principles which recommended him to the notice of Mr. Locke, with whose friendship, during the short remainder of that great man's life, he continued to be honoured. It is not improbable that to his intercourse with Mr. Locke we may in part ascribe the diligent attention to theological pursuits, scarcely met with in laymen, for which he afterwards became remarkable, and by the result of which he is now chiefly remembered.

It is also reasonable to conclude, that the early disciple of Locke was even at this period not averse to his theological views; a circumstance which when we consider how well known those views were, and in what light they were regarded by the orthodox—and that Mr. Shute was nevertheless, and continued to be, a man of great influence among the English Presbyterians, may afford us no unpalatable ground for the belief that, so early as the very beginning of the last century, the most distinguished men of this denomination had already deviated materially from the standards of their forefathers. He is shortly after this time described by Swift, in a letter to Archbishop King, as "the shrewdest head in England," a leader of the Presbyterians, and the person in

whom they principally confided. He soon afterwards published another pamphlet entitled, "The Rights of Protestant Dissenters," which reached a second edition in 1705.

Mr. Shute, from his rising talents and intimate connexion with the most distinguished men of the party, was already considered as a leading man among the Dissenters, and was consulted on that ground by the most eminent statesmen of the day, in relation to various public measures by which the interests of the Dissenters were affected, or in which it was supposed that their influence could be brought into beneficial operation. One of the most important of these was the then projected union with Scotland. On this occasion he was sent for by Lord Somers to attend a meeting of the cabinet ministers, to whom, when his opinion was asked, he gave it most warmly in favour of the design. They replied, that the influence of the English Dissenters on the Presbyterians of Scotland would be most important in bringing it about; and proposed that he, as a representative of the former body, should proceed to Scotland for that purpose. After some consideration, he agreed to abandon, for the present, his professional views, in order to promote this great object; stating, at the same time, that the Dissenters were not likely to exert themselves in it, unless it was understood that the Corporation and Test Acts were to be repealed. An engagement to this effect was accordingly given, which, however, appears to have been forgotten when the object was accomplished.

In consequence of his services on this occasion, Mr. Shute, after his return from Scotland, was

appointed, in 1708, one of the Commissioners of the Customs. About the same time, Francis Barrington, Esq. of Tofts, in Essex, who had married a relation of Mr. Shute, left him his estate, on condition of his assuming the name and arms of Barrington. In 1710, he received another accession to his fortune, at the death of Mr. Wildman, of Becket, in Berkshire, who also left him his estate; declaring in his will, that he did so merely because he knew no man who was so worthy of it.

In 1711, the Whig administration being dismissed, Mr. Barrington lost his place as Commissioner of the Customs. In the course of the political contests of that period, which it is well known rose to a more than ordinary pitch of violence and animosity, he continued his connexion with the Whig party, in support of whose views he soon afterwards published a pamphlet entitled, "A Dissuasive from Jacobitism." This publication, from its connexion with the great question of primary national interest and importance at the period, had a very extensive circulation, and is described* as "a specimen of clear and exact reasoning, and of a bold and intrepid exposition of the principles of civil liberty against popish superstition and arbitrary power." We have little doubt that, on the whole, it deserved this commendation; though some of the extracts given by Mr. Townsend may, perhaps, lead to the suspicion, that the author was led by a prejudice, not at all unnatural in the defenders of civil liberty in those days, to mix up the political and the reli-

* See Townsend's Life of Lord Barrington, prefixed to the last edition of his Theological Works, p. xxviii.

gious questions together. We cannot much wonder that, at that period, "popish superstitions and arbitrary power" were so closely associated in many men's minds as to be almost identified; but we have lived to see the cry of "no popery" pretty effectually separated from all more than ordinary pretensions to an attachment to civil freedom.

On the accession of George I. Mr. Barrington was among those who were immediately presented to the new sovereign; but he declined the offers of preferment that were made to him, so long as the Schism and Occasional Conformity Acts, which had been passed during the late administration, and by which the principles of the toleration previously enjoyed, imperfect and unsatisfactory as it was, were obviously violated, remained unrepealed. From this time they remained, it is true, nearly a dead letter; but they were not formally erased from the statute book till the year 1717: after which (in 1720), Mr. B. was raised to the Irish peerage by the titles of Baron Barrington, of Newcastle, and Viscount Barrington, of Ardglass; he received at the same time a reversionary grant of the office of Master of the Rolls in Ireland, which he resigned in 1731.

In the first parliament of George I. Mr. B. was returned to the House of Commons, as member for Berwick-upon-Tweed; and was again elected for the same place in 1722. He does not appear to have been a frequent or eloquent speaker in parliament; but from his reputation and connexions, was, doubtless, a man of considerable influence, and took an active part in support-

ing the Whig administrations of the early part of that reign.

It is also certain that he exerted himself with vigour and effect whenever any propositions were brought forward affecting either the civil rights of the Dissenters or the cause of religious liberty and free inquiry in general. When (in 1717) the bill was brought in to repeal the Schism and Occasional Conformity Acts of the late reign, it was at first proposed to introduce a clause providing a sort of test in relation to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; as to which (says Dr. Calamy*) the body of the Dissenters were (unkindly and without any just ground) represented as wavering and unsettled. However this may have been, there can be no question that a large portion of them were fully prepared to resist, to the utmost of their power, every attempt to impose additional restraints of any kind on the consciences of men; and of this class Mr. B. was the active and efficient representative. In a great measure through his exertions, this proposition was defeated.

It may have been owing to his conduct on this occasion, as well as to the part he took in the struggle at Salters'-hall, that an attempt was made to defeat his election for Berwick, in 1722, by raising against him the cry of Arianism. This cry is referred to in the following remarkable passage by Mr. Bennet, of Newcastle, in the dedication of one of his works to Lord Barrington:—"I speak not this from an apprehension that your lordship has any opinions in religion that render you obnoxious, or that you need be

* Calamy's Life and Times, vol. ii. p. 403.

shy of owning on proper occasions. I have reason to think you have examined religion and formed your creed with some care and exactness. In the mean time, what have the voters for Berwick to do in this matter? I cannot discern the obligation we are under, even in religious societies and churches, to pry into our brethren's sentiments, especially in the abstruser questions of religion, in which most of them, I am confident, must, on examination, if they answer uprightly, return a *non liquet*. And I must confess, when I see any busy this way, making a scrutiny into other christians' breasts, and going about in quest of heretics, I presently have the idea of an old *Rabbi* starting up before me, or of a *Phariseus truncatus*, or some such composition of pride, self-sufficiency, and censoriousness; and when this is done in any of the *δυσνόητα* of religion, as is often the case in things which it has pleased God in his wisdom to place out of our reach—the *αἰρέματα ἑήματα* of the divine nature and government—'tis more assuming and dangerous. But when we carry the minister into politics, and are for making our own opinions and dictates not only the test of other people's orthodoxy, but their qualification for a civil trust, the usurpation is still worse.”*

In the following year (1723), a very unpleasant affair took place relating to a joint stock company and lottery, professedly for the formation of a seaport and trading company at Har-

* Bennet's "Memorial of the Reformation, chiefly in England;" as quoted in the very interesting and valuable "Historical Proofs and Illustrations" of the Hewley case, when brought by appeal before the House of Lords.

burgh, in the electorate of Hanover (one of the multitude of mischievous bubbles which occasioned so much distress and confusion in the fatal year 1720); in the management of which Lord Barrington was unfortunately concerned. The matter was brought before the House of Commons, who voted, "that the project called the 'Harburgh Lottery,' is an infamous and fraudulent undertaking;" and Lord Barrington was in consequence expelled the house. It is not very easy, perhaps, to ascertain the whole truth on this unfortunate business; but there is good reason to think that, as far as Lord Barrington was concerned in it, he was more sinned against than sinning; and that the vote of the House of Commons was dictated, in a great measure, by party-spirit and the personal influence of Sir R. Walpole, who chose to consider himself as disobliged by the steady support which Lord Barrington, and, through his influence, the dissenting body in general, had given to his predecessor, Lord Sunderland.

Lord Barrington's influence with the Dissenters, especially with the Presbyterians, to which body he himself belonged, was at all times very great, and was uniformly exerted in promoting a regard to those enlarged and liberal principles of religious liberty on which alone their secession from the church could be fully vindicated. This was particularly the case on the occasion of the celebrated Salters'-hall controversy, when there is every reason to believe that several members of the liberal majority acted as they did, in a great measure, in consequence of his opinion and advice. Dr. Calamy, who declined voting at all on this occasion, speaks of himself as earnestly

importuned to come forward by some of the principal leaders of the party for subscribing, in order, as they expressed it, "to prevent Mr Barrington Shute's endeavour to break the body of ministers to pieces."* Among the multitude of pamphlets which issued from the press on this occasion, was one attributed to Mr. Barrington, entitled "An Account of the late Proceedings of the Dissenting Ministers at Salters'-hall, with some Thoughts concerning the Imposition of human forms for Articles of Faith;" also, "A Letter to J. B. Shute, Esq.," by Mr. T. Bradbury, one of the most zealous and active of the party who sought to impose their own confessions of faith on their brethren.

Mr. Barrington had been, till this time, a member of Mr. Bradbury's congregation; but, from this time forward, left him, and became a hearer of Dr. Jeremiah Hunt, one of the most eminent of the class who were now beginning to be called liberal or rational Dissenters. He had, in all probability, long before this time embraced Anti-trinitarian sentiments; though, as far as we can judge from his writings, he never proceeded further in this direction than a high form of Arianism. Still he would have been not less averse to impose his own opinions than those of any other man, as a condition of religious communion, or as necessary to entitle a religious professor to the name of a Christian disciple. He had a high value for the sacred writings; and it is evident, from his theological works, that he was eminently skilled in them; well versed in the original languages, and accustomed to make them the objects

* See Calamy's Life and Times, vol. ii. p. 413.

of his diligent and habitual study. He valued no society more highly than that of those learned men with whom he could enter fully into the interesting and important questions which arose in pursuing the studies to which they were alike attached; and when, as was frequently the case, one or more such men as Hunt, or Lardner, or Chandler, or Benson, were among his visitors—men who would have been an ornament to any church, both for their learning and for the other graces which we desire to see united in divines and ministers of Christ—it was their custom to discuss such topics with that openness and freedom which is the peculiar privilege of enlightened and well-instructed minds, untrammelled by the arbitrary restrictions of any human authority, and free to follow the light of truth into whatever path it appeared to lead.

They had also the occasional company at these learned conferences of one of the most remarkable of the freethinkers of that period, Mr. Anthony Collins, who was a neighbour of Lord Barrington's in Essex, and a frequent visitor at his house. In one of their conversations, Mr. Collins is said to have observed, that he had a very great respect for the memory of St. Paul; and added, "I think so well of him, who was both a man of sense and a gentleman, that if he had asserted he had worked miracles himself, I would have believed him." Lord Barrington immediately produced a passage in which that Apostle asserts his having wrought miracles; (perhaps 1 Cor. xiv. 18;) Mr. Collins appeared somewhat disconcerted, and soon after took his hat and quitted the company. When Lord B. in another conversation, asked Mr. Col-

lins what was the reason that, though he seemed himself to have very little faith in the doctrines of religion, he yet took great care that his servants should attend regularly at church, his reply was, that he did this to prevent their robbing or murdering him.*

In 1725, Lord Barrington published his "*Miscellanea Sacra*," the work by which he is chiefly known as a theologian, and has acquired a reputation in this department of literature which is likely to endure. It exhibits the fruit of much learning and research, and contains many remarks and suggestions which are well worthy of attention, as throwing much valuable light on Scripture history, and especially on one of the most obscure chapters of it, the nature and distribution of the gifts of the Spirit, and the constitution of the primitive churches as depending on and influenced by them. At the same time it must be confessed, that his reasoning proceeds, in many instances, on assumptions which, if not altogether gratuitous and hypothetical, are at least founded on imperfect and unsatisfactory data, and, in the absence of distinct and definite original information, often require us to lay a stress on certain incidental allusions, or obscure and vague expressions, which it is very doubtful whether they will bear. We would not, by any means, discourage the spirit of active and searching inquiry, which, not contented with passively receiving what is directly told us, seeks to cross-examine the witnesses, and ingeniously put together the passing hints which are scattered through their writings, so as to infer from

* Townsend's Life, &c., p. xix.

them much more than they ever meant to tell. On the contrary, we are aware that in this way much curious and valuable information has been often elicited, throwing a clearer light on many otherwise ill-understood passages both of sacred and profane history; but still a distinction must be drawn between what is learned from the direct testimony of competent witnesses, and the mere results of inference and conjecture.

In the introduction, the author has given an abstract of the scripture history of the apostles, arranged in chronological order; fixing the dates of the principal events recorded with great probability on the whole, though some points are, of necessity, in a great measure conjectural, and founded on imperfect evidence. Thus he assumes, that it was not till the trance which St. Paul speaks of as taking place when he was worshiping in the temple, (Acts xxii. 14,) and which he takes it for granted was the same with that which is referred to (2 Cor. xii. 2) where he speaks of having been caught up to the third heaven, that he was advanced to the character and entered on the functions of an apostle; being then, and not till then, appointed to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter, under the direction of a special revelation, had indeed baptized Cornelius; but it does not appear that either he, or any of his brethren, addressed themselves to any but the *devout* Gentiles who had already acknowledged the divine origin of the Mosaic law, though they did not conform to its ritual.

Lord Barrington distributes the history of the apostles' preaching into a succession of periods, according to the steps by which it was gradually

opened out, so as to be addressed indiscriminately to all classes. At first it is clear that the Gospel was preached only to Jews, and to proselytes in the strictest sense of that word, those, namely, who had submitted to the rite of circumcision, and conformed to the ritual law in all its extent. To this class many writers give the distinctive name of proselytes of righteousness. But besides these, there is said to have been another class, called "proselytes of the gate," who had formally abandoned polytheism and idolatry, but had not bound themselves by the restrictions of the Jewish ritual. Now, it is assumed by our author that Cornelius was a proselyte of this description, and, therefore, that at his conversion the door of the church was still not thrown wide open for the admission of all mankind. This second period of partial extension he supposes to terminate in the year 45, with the separation of Paul and Barnabas for a peculiar mission, as recorded in Acts xiii. 1. Then, according to him, really began the conversion of the heathen, of whom the first fruit was Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of Cyprus; but the harvest of idolatrous Gentiles was for the first time brought into the church when the apostles openly declared their determination to turn to them from the Jews at Antioch, in Pisidia. From this time forward St. Paul so exercised his mission as to receive, by way of eminence, the distinctive title of Apostle of the Gentiles. But even now, our author conceives that this complete publication of the comprehensive scheme of their religion was unknown to the other apostles, and that it continued for four years longer without its being in the least degree suspected by any one at Jerusalem that any of the

hitherto *idolatrous* Gentiles had been admitted into the church. In the year 49 commenced the *second* period of the conversion of the heathen, when the appeal was made to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. At this meeting St. Paul disclosed to Peter, James, and John, but as he himself states (Gal. ii. 2) privately, to them which were of reputation, the doctrine which he preached to the Gentiles. But it continued a profound secret, unknown to the other apostles, and more especially to the general body of the Jewish Christians, till St. Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, in the year 58, when its open avowal created so violent a commotion. From this time forward to the subversion of the Jewish polity constitutes the *third* period of the conversion of the heathen.

In the view thus given by Lord Barrington of the gradual opening of the comprehensive scheme for the salvation of all men by the Gospel, there is some truth, mixed up, probably, with a good deal of fanciful conjecture. We cannot easily believe that even the apostles were so obstinately blind to the obvious import of Peter's vision as not to perceive that the wall of partition was now completely broken down. Nor can we readily imagine that the proceedings of Paul and his adherents should remain so long concealed, or escape the observation and censure of those among their countrymen whose prejudices were so strong, and whose hostility was so much excited by any thing which tended to infringe on their rigid notions of their exclusive privileges. The distinction on which he lays so much stress between two supposed different classes of proselytes is at least

dubious; though it is also assumed by many other eminent and learned writers. But Lardner, and Doddridge in the notes to his "Expositor," seem to have done much to shew that it is altogether imaginary, and that the name was given to none but such as complied in all points with the requisitions of the Mosaic law, and thus became, to all intents and purposes, Jews.

Lord Barrington's Essay on the Gifts of the Spirit shews much ingenuity and research, and a careful examination of all the passages which could by any means throw light on this very obscure inquiry. He takes great pains to explain the meaning of the different expressions used by St. Paul in describing these gifts, and his conjectures are as likely to be true as those of any other writer who has attempted to investigate this difficult subject. This, it may be thought, is not saying much; for the fact is, that the accounts of the communication of spiritual gifts in the Acts, and the casual references occasionally made to them in the Epistles, though, doubtless, abundantly intelligible to those to whom they were addressed, who were familiar with the exercise of such powers both by themselves and others, are too imperfect to be made the basis of any precise and definite theory. But though we may not be altogether satisfied either with Lord Barrington's or with any other account of the distinction between the "word of wisdom" and the "word of knowledge," or clearly understand the respective functions of "prophets" and "teachers," or what is meant by "helps" and "governments," as described by the Apostle, or rather taken for granted as things perfectly well known to his correspond-

ents; yet the passages in which they are thus obscurely referred to are by no means the least interesting or valuable portion of the Epistles. On the contrary, from the very circumstance of the passing and incidental manner in which the mention of these things is introduced by the writer, as a matter of course,—as one of those ordinary, every-day facts about which neither he nor the members of the Corinthian church could have a moment's doubt or hesitation,—we derive a most valuable argument in proof of the reality of these gifts, and, consequently, of the divine authority of the Christian system.*

The second Essay is devoted to an inquiry into the distinction of the characters of apostles, elders, and brethren in the primitive church. The third is employed in determining the time when Paul and Barnabas were called by special appointment to the apostolic office. In the fourth he endeavours to shew that the epistle or decree of the apostles respecting the abstinence from blood, &c., was addressed not to all Gentile converts, but only to such as had previously been proselytes of the gate. We have already observed, that this distinction, on which Lord Barrington and Dr. Benson, with some other learned writers, lay so much stress, is, perhaps, not supported by sufficient evidence; and, in fact, as the abstinence recommended by the apostles seems to have been regarded as a sort of compromise for the sake of peace, the reason given for it applying equally to all classes of Gentile converts in every place where

* See this argument very ably urged by Mr. Belsham, in a long and elaborate note on 1 Cor. xii.

a synagogue of the Jews existed, and where, consequently, it might be expected that Jewish believers would also be found, with whom it was desirable to cultivate the amicable relations and intercourse of Christian brethren,—it is difficult to see the grounds on which this opinion can be maintained. As it was, after all, a question not of principle, but merely of expediency, or compliance with the customs and prejudices of their Jewish brethren, who till now had formed the whole of the church, and were all zealous for the law,—so it would naturally cease with the reason for it when this class of disciples ceased to exist; as, on the other hand, it may possibly revive on a change of circumstances, if any church of Jewish Christians should again be formed.

In the Essay “On the Dispensations of God to Mankind as revealed in the Scriptures,” first published in 1725, it is the author’s object to shew the “single notion,” as he expresses it, that runs through the whole, in order to make it appear that they are part of one general plan, and thus display the connexion of the several parts, and, in unity of revealed truth, the strongest evidence that can attend it. “If it shall appear that there is one worthy and noble design pursued through the books of the Old and New Testament, though they had forty or more different authors, and were not written in less than 1600 years, it will amount to the clearest demonstration that the Bible cannot be the work of enthusiasts writing in different ages. And will not every one then see, that it must have been from Him who exists through all ages, and sees what is past, present, and to come?” This one object he takes to be

“displaying the glory of God’s perfections, particularly his moral perfections; or, which will come to the same thing, to assist our reason in doing what is right, and thereby pursuing our own happiness, and promoting the happiness of others in the best manner we can, as long as our present being lasts and as we have other beings around us. The idea of this dissertation is excellent, and it contains many valuable observations, the result of much study and a diligent examination of Scripture. Of the manner in which he has endeavoured to develop this idea, different readers will vary in their estimates, according to the extent to which they agree or differ with the author in the adoption of various doctrinal opinions and principles of interpretation.

In the edition of Lord Barrington’s theological works published in 1828 by the Rev. George Townsend, there is added his Lordship’s part of a correspondence with Dr. Lardner on the subject of this dissertation, and in defence of some positions in it which the Doctor had called in question. He vindicates them at considerable length, and with acuteness and ability, though, in a great measure, by a repetition of the same principles and modes of interpretation which he had already used. It would have added greatly to the interest of these letters if we could also have seen Dr. Lardner’s replies. In the same manner it would have been very interesting to have had an opportunity of knowing, from his own remarks on it, the impression made on Lord Barrington by Lardner’s celebrated letter on the Logos; for that he was the person represented under the fictitious designation of Papinian has been long well understood. We

feel it difficult to persuade ourselves, that a person of so much learning and candour, and so well able to appreciate the true merit of an argument on a question like this, should fail to be struck with the force of Lardner's reasoning; and cannot but think that it would, at least, tend materially to shake the confidence with which he maintained his Arian views, if it did not lead him to abandon them altogether. But on this subject we have no means of attaining any certain information.

After the unpleasant affair already mentioned, which deprived him of his seat in parliament, Lord Barrington seems to have taken no further active part in public business; but lived chiefly in retirement, occupying himself, for the most part, with those literary and theological pursuits in which he was so well versed, and in which he appears to have taken great delight. He was, however, prevailed on,* contrary to his inclination, and in apparent prejudice to his health and affairs, to become a candidate at the general election in 1727, and might have been chosen, if his principles would have permitted him to give a bribe of forty pounds; but he had too strict a regard for the interest of his country to countenance corruption, and trifle with the sacredness of oaths. He died at Becket, his seat in Berkshire, after an illness of only seven hours, on the 14th of December, 1734, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

As a theological writer, Lord Barrington is certainly entitled to stand high. His learning was correct and extensive, and his diligence and research remarkable; especially in one who pur-

* Townsend, p. xxiv,

sued investigation of this kind from no professional motive, but merely for his own private satisfaction. In the account we have given of his principal work, we have called in question some of his conclusions; but it contains, nevertheless, much ingenious criticism, and many valuable suggestions, which other writers have enlarged on to advantage. His example and advice were evidently of great service to Benson and Lardner, and, probably, to others who contributed to the high reputation for theological attainments deservedly enjoyed by the English Presbyterians of the earlier part of the last century. He is also remarkable for ingenuousness and candour, in which, as in other respects, he is a model to theological writers, the vehemence of whose zeal for controverted opinions too often evinces not so much a pure conviction of their truth and importance, as the extent to which they have connected the idea of *self* with the opinions they have once advanced.

"I cannot but despise," says he, "the conduct of those writers who will put on the appearance of assurance and certainty in points where they are far from being at that certainty which they affect so much to be thought to have; and every one must have a much worse opinion of those who give themselves this air only to serve private or party views. The first proceeds from a degree of pride, to which human nature is more easily carried; while the second arises from a degree of dishonesty, which has been contracted by lower acts of it, repeated from time to time, till it is grown habitual, and ends in venturing on this high injury to mankind. The first moral virtues of a writer are to divest himself of these enor-

mous passions; to search for truth alone, and to propose his conclusions to his reader with that degree of evidence and certainty, or of doubt and difficulty, which they have in his own mind. He is required to consider himself as accountable to God for misleading any man by the superiority of his talents; and as accountable to his reader for the insolence of endeavouring to impose on him by means of any real or imagined advantage he has over him. If these virtues were practised by every writer, we should receive more profit from the best and less hurt from the worst, than we now reap from either of them; and writing would then be in the best state that this state of imperfection will allow."*

Lord Barrington, though sincerely attached to the cause of the Dissenters, did not consider an occasional conformity as inconsistent with that character; and he probably carried this sort of compliance to a length which we should find it difficult to reconcile to our principles. This is, however, the almost unavoidable result of an elevated rank, in exposing those who occupy it to temptations, from whose influence humbler men may think themselves happy to be exempted. That the consequence was, his family altogether deserting the cause of which their father had been the advocate and ornament, can excite little surprise. Lord Barrington left six sons, one of whom died young; while the other five all entered into public life, and arrived at high stations in their respective departments. The eldest, who, of course, succeeded to his father's honours, filled

* Misc. Sacra, Essay i, sec. 16.

successively the offices of Secretary at War, and Chancellor of the Exchequer; another became a Judge, and a third a General, a fourth an Admiral, and the youngest, Shute Barrington, who entered the church, was raised to the Bishopric, first of Llandaff, afterwards of Salisbury and of Durham; in which last eminent station he died, at a very advanced age, in 1826.

SAMUEL CHANDLER,

ONE of the most learned and eminent of the liberal divines of the last century, was descended from ancestors distinguished for their attachment to religious liberty, and who, in less fortunate times, had suffered in defence of their principles; bearing cheerfully the spoiling of their goods, that they might better preserve their peace of mind, and maintain inviolate their title to a more enduring substance. He was born in 1693, at Hungerford in Berkshire, where his father, the Rev. Henry Chandler, was then minister to a congregation of Protestant dissenters. Mr. H. Chandler afterwards removed to Bath, where he spent the greater part of his ministerial life. He is said to have been a man very respectable for talents and character, though he was not led by circumstances to present himself prominently to the public notice.

The subject of this memoir discovering at an early age a decided taste for literary pursuits, it was carefully cultivated with a view to the Christian ministry for which he was destined. For this purpose he was sent first to an academy at Bridgewater, under the direction of Mr. Moore; but was afterwards removed to Gloucester, where he became a pupil of Mr. Samuel Jones, a dissenting minister of great learning, and deservedly high reputation as a teacher. Under this gentleman's instructions, at Gloucester, and afterwards at Tewkesbury, many of those were trained who in the succeeding age occupied the most eminent

stations in our churches, and two at least of the brightest lights of the establishment received the greater part of the accomplishments which fitted them to adorn and do honour to the elevated stations to which they were afterwards raised. *Secker*, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and *Butler*, better known to later times as the author of the celebrated treatise on the Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion, than by the bishopric of Durham, to which his talents and merit alone elevated him, were both fellow-students with Chandler in this humble seminary. The three companions were at that period nearly on a par in condition and expectations, as well as in abilities; and though the very different course which they pursued through life permitted two of them to rise to high stations and take rank with the great ones of the earth, they retained to the last a regard and friendship for their old associate; and perhaps were ready to acknowledge, in the midst of the outward pomp and grandeur of the world, that in the true dignity of the mind he was still their equal. Chandler continued steady to his original principles and profession as a Protestant dissenter, and defended them in several of his publications with no small spirit and success; though it has been stated that he had repeated offers of valuable preferment in the church, perhaps through the influence of these early connexions, who would doubtless have been very ready to tempt him to follow their example.

Mr. Chandler, having made a suitable improvement of the advantages he enjoyed under Mr. Jones in the acquisition of those stores of classical, biblical, and oriental learning, which he

extended in after-life, and displayed in numerous and valuable writings, quitted the academy in 1714, and soon distinguished himself by his talents in the pulpit. In 1716 he was chosen minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Peckham, near London, where he continued for some years. Whether he took any active part at this early period in public affairs relating to the dissenters, does not appear; though it is not improbable that his energetic character and powerful talents would lead him to come forward when he had an opportunity, and, if he came forward, he could not fail to distinguish himself. His name occurs in the honourable list of the majority on the celebrated question of subscription at Salters' Hall, in 1719, along with those of Hunt, Lardner, Lowman, and other worthies of that and the coming age. While at Peckham he married; and shortly afterwards had the misfortune to lose a great part of his property in the fatal South Sea scheme of 1720. Becoming thus embarrassed in his circumstances, he engaged for some years in the trade of a bookseller, still retaining, however, his ministerial connexion with his congregation at Peckham. In consequence of this secular occupation, several of his earliest works bear his name in the double capacity of author and publisher; a circumstance which, it seems, misled Archbishop Wake, to whom he had presented one of them, and who, not knowing that he was any thing but a bookseller, naturally expressed surprise to find so much good learning and just reasoning in a person of his profession, and regret that one so well able to write good books should occupy his time in selling them.

While Mr. Chandler was minister at Peckham, some gentlemen of different denominations of dissenters came to a resolution to set up and support a weekly evening lecture at the old Old Jewry for the winter half-year. The subjects to be treated of in this lecture were the evidences of natural and revealed religion, with answers to the principal objections against them. Among the ministers to whom the conduct of this lecture was entrusted were Chandler and Lardner; and the discourses delivered by both these eminent men seem to have served as the foundation, or to have suggested the idea, of performances of much greater extent and importance for which they were afterwards deservedly celebrated. After some time Mr. Lardner ceased to have any connexion with the plan, which it was supposed might be conducted with more consistency of reasoning and uniformity of design by a single person; and it was accordingly undertaken by Mr. Chandler, whose talents besides were, doubtless, of a character better adapted to the conduct of a popular lecture.

In the discharge of this duty he preached some sermons on the confirmation which miracles give to the divine mission of Christ and the truth of his religion; and vindicated the argument against the objections advanced by Collins in his "Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion." These sermons he afterwards enlarged and threw into the form of a regular treatise, which was published in 1725, under the title of "A Vindication of the Christian Religion, in two parts; first, a Discourse on the Nature and Use of Miracles; and, secondly, an Answer to a late Book entitled

a Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons, &c." This is a work of very considerable merit and value, and deserves to be studied by those who wish to obtain a full understanding of the controversy between the Christian advocate and the unbeliever. Mr. Chandler's view of the nature and use of miracles, as stated in the first part of this treatise, is on the whole good and judicious. After defining a miracle to be "a work visibly performed by any being, that is really and truly above his natural power and capacity, without the assistance of some superior agent," he argues that the performance of such works in support of the authority of a teacher, sent to make known to mankind a dispensation consistent with the views which our reason acknowledges of the perfections of God and the character of the divine moral administration, is probable in itself, and a fit subject of belief, when accredited by the same testimony on which we receive other historical facts. The folly of the demand to *see* a miracle, in order to be convinced, or the notion that miracles as such are not capable of being attested like other appearances and events, is well and ably exposed. Still he contends that they derive a great part of their own credibility, and consequently of the authority which they can communicate to any message professing to be divine, from the excellence and reasonableness of this message, in itself considered. The assurances of divine grace and mercy as made known in the Gospel, the terms on which they are granted, and the expectations held out in a future life, *when published*, are such as approve themselves to our understandings as right and good; but it does not, therefore, follow

that these expectations are well-founded, unless some proof can be afforded that they were published by a messenger sent from God, and duly authorized for that purpose. On the other hand, no miracles whatever, either seen or attested, could authorize our assent to a doctrine or message inconsistent with just and rational views of the divine attributes, or with other equally express declarations of the divine will. "The proper design of every revelation that is really from God must be this,—to lead men into just and becoming sentiments of the Divine being and perfections; to direct and appoint that method of worship which will be acceptable to himself; to recover men from their ignorance, to reform them from their vices, and to lead them into the practice of virtue and true goodness by proper motives and arguments; for the general welfare of societies, for every man's particular happiness in this life, and preparation for a better world hereafter." Such a design as this seems to be worthy of the allwise and merciful Governor of the world, and what we may expect from him who knows our infirmities and wishes our happiness. And therefore, whenever the circumstances of mankind become such as to need a particular interposition of his providence for this end, there is nothing in reason that forbids us to expect it, nor any thing in the nature of the case itself which should hinder him from granting it. But unless miracles are calculated to serve this end, they ought never to be acknowledged as any proof of a divine mission; because we may certainly conclude that God never will interpose in any case where there is no need, or to bring about a design unworthy

of himself. "It may here possibly be asked, Is this good reasoning, to prove the miracles to be wrought by God, by appealing to the doctrines or end for which they are wrought; and then to prove the doctrines or justify the end by an appeal to the miracles? I answer, that the very doing of the miracle argues the interposition or assistance of some superior agent; and that the end for which such a miracle is done evidently discovers the nature of that being by whose influence it is performed. The doctrines prove, not the existence of a superior power, but whether the assistance be given by a good or a bad power;—the miracles prove, not the goodness of the doctrines, but that he who preaches the doctrines so confirmed acts by an authority superior to his own. They neither of them separately prove the divine mission; but where they both concur, they certainly prove this proposition,—that such a person acts by the authority of some superior, good, and powerful being; or, in other words, that his mission is agreeable to the will of the Supreme; and therefore, in order to such proof, they ought both to concur."—P. 95.

This argument is just in itself, and well and forcibly stated; but it may be doubted whether the author has not considerably weakened its effect by the concession that works properly miraculous, as far as human agents are concerned, may be performed by the intervention of other subordinate spirits, either good or bad. It is a concession apparently inconsistent with many express declarations of Scripture; it renders the *criterion* of a genuine divine miracle, such as may be received for a sufficient test of the authority of a

teacher or prophet professing to come from God, more complicated, difficult, and uncertain, and checks the confidence with which we are disposed to yield our assent to his declarations.

In the second part of this work, in reply to Collins's argument, founded on the difficulty or impossibility of applying to the Messiah many of the Old Testament prophecies, when literally interpreted, he shews that, even if this were admitted, the other proofs of the divine authority of the Gospel scheme would remain unaffected; that these prophecies were not urged by Christ and his apostles as the sole proof of Christianity; that the difficulty, admitting it to exist, of applying to Christ many of the passages supposed to be cited as prophecies, does not by any means attach to all the passages so cited, many of which are referrible to the Messiah and to him only; and that others, which undoubtedly refer in the first instance to the return from the captivity or other shortly impending event in the Jewish history, may also have a general or mystical reference to that great event in which the whole scheme of the Jewish dispensation was consummated and brought to a close. These grounds of argument are ably urged and illustrated; though there is good reason to think that the author has built on them a heavier superstructure than they will bear, and has extended his conclusion beyond what the facts of the case will fairly warrant. But the work in general shews great acuteness and learning, and is written with a degree of candour and moderation highly creditable. Indeed, there is good reason to think that he and the other able writers among the rational dissenters, who at this

period came forward in defence of revelation, by the frankness with which, in the midst of their zealous defence of their own principles, they with equal zeal vindicated the right of others to take the opposite side, and to bring forward whatever arguments appeared to them to be fitted to promote their cause, were mainly instrumental in diffusing more liberal notions of the true grounds on which all such questions should be discussed, by leaving them to be debated on their own merits, without seeking for the unauthorized interference of the civil magistrate.

Soon after the publication of this work in the year 1726, Mr. Chandler received an invitation to settle, as minister, with the Presbyterian congregation in the Old Jewry, one of the most respectable societies among the Dissenters. Here he continued, first as assistant, and afterwards as pastor, for the space of forty years; and discharged the duties of the ministerial office with great assiduity and ability, being much esteemed and regarded by his own congregation, and acquiring a distinguished reputation both as a preacher and a writer. That he was a powerful and popular preacher, much followed and highly estimated in that as in every other capacity connected with his station as a Christian minister, is evident from the frequency of the calls upon him to preach for public institutions, before public bodies and societies, and on other remarkable or extraordinary occasions. His published sermons, however, are distinguished for a strength and clearness of argument addressed to the thinking part of his audience, rather than for any peculiarly

ornamental style or flowers of eloquence to captivate the multitude. They shew him, in common indeed with his other publications, to have been, in theological sentiment, an Arian of nearly the same school with Peirce, Benson, and other distinguished ministers of that day in the Presbyterian denomination. But he does not appear to have taken any public part in the Trinitarian controversy, which, in fact, was not brought very prominently forward during the greater part of his active life. The most remarkable of Chandler's controversial writings are his replies to some of the leading Freethinkers of his day, particularly Collins and Morgan. His publications in this controversy are numerous and important; shewing not merely a thorough acquaintance with the subject, but a power of reasoning, and a clearness and force of statement, which rendered him a very formidable opponent. Though not in general displaying in any offensive form the asperity from which so few writers on controversial theology are free, nor disgraced by the unworthy personalities too often substituted in the place of argument, they are frequently remarkable for a keenness of sarcasm, and an authoritative uncompromising dogmatism, proceeding from a consciousness of his own superiority, which he is at no pains to conceal.

In 1727, Mr. Chandler published "Reflections on the Conduct of the modern Deists in their late Writings against Christianity, &c.; occasioned chiefly by two Books, entitled 'A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons, &c.' and 'The Scheme of literal Prophecy considered.'" In the following

year appeared, in answer to the objections of the same writer, "A Vindication of the Antiquity and Authority of Daniel's Prophecies."

Mr. Chandler, in common with almost all the liberal theologians of his day, was deeply imbued with a horror of Popery, not only from a conviction of the erroneousness of its doctrines, and its baseless claim to spiritual domination over the consciences of men, but from the natural association established by events then fresh and recent, and by the political circumstances of the times, between Popery and the subversion of civil liberty. Under the influence of this feeling he published, in 1731, in two volumes, 4to, a translation of "The History of the Inquisition, by Philip à Limborch;" to which he prefixed a large Introduction, "concerning the rise and progress of persecution, and the real and pretended causes of it." This Introduction he afterwards extended and published in a separate form, under the title of "The History of Persecution, in four Parts:—1. Among the Heathens; 2. Under the Christian Emperors; 3. Under the Papacy and Inquisition; 4. Among Protestants." In this work he endeavours to shew that the points in dispute among Christian sects are of secondary importance when compared with the great principles on which (at least in profession) they are all agreed;—that among the causes of persecution have been spiritual pride, ambition, and, above all, the fatal connexion of the church of Christ with the kingdoms of this world;—that the decrees of councils and synods are of no authority in matters of faith;—that imposing subscriptions to human creeds is unreasonable and pernicious; and that the Christian

religion absolutely condemns persecution for conscience' sake.

About this time appeared a valuable tract, written by Mr. Chandler, and published with the sanction and concurrence of some other dissenting ministers, entitled "Plain Reasons for being a Christian;" containing a very distinct and satisfactory general view of the evidences of the Christian revelation, reduced into a small compass, as it appears to have been intended for wide circulation, but drawn up in such a form as to leave unnoticed scarcely any topic of material importance which has a bearing on the question. As is justly observed by Bishop Watson, who has included this essay in his well-known "Collection of Theological Tracts," the full merit of this piece will not be seen or fully appreciated by a hasty reading;—every article of it contains matter for much consideration, and shews the author to have been well acquainted with his subject. In fact, each article may be considered as comprising a series of topics or suggestions on which a diffuse and popular writer might enlarge at great length, and which he might with great advantage take as his guide in dwelling on these important inquiries, and recommending their results to his readers or hearers.

Mr. Chandler had projected a general Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament, and commenced by the publication of a Paraphrase and Critical Commentary on the Prophecy of Joel, which appeared in 1735; with a Dedication to the Right Honourable Arthur Onslow, then Speaker of the House of Commons. This is a treatise of considerable merit and authority,

and was favourably received. He afterwards made considerable progress in a similar work on Isaiah; but before he had completed it, he met with the MS. Lexicon and Lectures of the celebrated Arabic Professor Schultens, who recommends studying the Hebrew through the medium of the Arabic, as the means, from its greatly superior extent and copiousness, of throwing light on the obscurities and difficulties of the kindred languages of scripture. Our author was so struck by the importance of this suggestion, that he laid aside his unfinished design until he should have the opportunity of renewing the study of the Hebrew language on this plan; an undertaking which he was unfortunately prevented by other engagements from carrying into effect.

In 1741 appeared "a Vindication of the History of the Old Testament, in answer to the Misrepresentations and Calumnies of Thomas Morgan, M.D. and Moral Philosopher." To this was added, in the following year, in opposition to the same writer, "A Defence of the Prime Ministry, and the Character of Joseph." In these works he vindicates the sacred history, and particularly the characters of the ancient patriarchs, from many captious objections, with great spirit and success. It must, however, be added, that they display a greater tendency to asperity and personal satire than had hitherto been visible in our author's controversial performances; a peculiarity which was probably provoked, if not justified, by the writings and character of his antagonist. Dr. Leland observes, that in this work of our author he has clearly proved that Morgan had been guilty of manifest falsehoods, and of the most gross pervers-

sions of the scripture history, even in those very instances in which he assures the reader that he has kept close to the account given by the Hebrew historians.

In 1744 Mr. Chandler published an able tract entitled "The Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ re-examined, and their Testimony proved entirely consistent." In this piece he enumerates the various objections which have been from time to time advanced by sceptical writers against this narrative, and their attempts to place the real or apparent discrepancies between the accounts of the different evangelists in such a light as to discredit their testimony; and he shews much ability and acuteness in comparing and combining the different accounts, so as to make it appear that the variations on which the greatest stress is laid are capable of being reconciled;—that they are, in fact, only different parts of the same story, some of which have been more fully related by one evangelist, and others by another.

In the succeeding years of the "*unnatural* rebellion," as it is styled in many of the publications of the time, our author, like most of his brethren, exerted himself with zeal and activity in support of the existing order of things; and both from the pulpit and the press endeavoured to give a desirable direction to the expression of public feeling on the occasion, especially among the dissenting body. At this period, as well as in the former outbreak of 1715, the Dissenters universally came forward with vigour and effect to maintain the parliamentary throne. Their services, perhaps, were not acknowledged and requited to the extent which might reasonably have been ex-

pected ; they were, however, abundantly sensible that their remaining grievances and disabilities were a trifle compared to the consequences which would probably ensue on the threatened restoration of the Stuart dynasty, and both their public principles and their regard to their own interest and security led them to deprecate so formidable a calamity.

In 1748 Mr. Chandler took a part in the controversy on the questions between the Church and the Dissenters, which were raised into activity at this period by the appearance of Mr. White's Letters to a Dissenting Gentleman. Our author's pamphlet is entitled, "The Case of Subscription to explanatory Articles of Faith, as a qualification for Admission into the Christian Ministry, calmly and impartially reviewed." It contains an able vindication of the general principles of free inquiry and individual judgment, and a judicious application of these principles to the particular case under discussion. His familiarity with the ancient fathers and with the early history of the church, are exhibited to great advantage in the refutation of an assertion of his opponent, that subscription to articles and creeds was countenanced by the practice of the primitive church. He shews, on the contrary, that no such claim was set up even by the apostles, who, if any, might be supposed to have a plausible right to assert such an authority ; that what have been called creeds in the writings of the early fathers are nothing more than voluntary declarations of individual opinion ; and that, in fact, the earliest attempts in this manner to lord it over the con-

sciences of men, are subsequent to the ill-omened and mischievous union of church and state.

About this period, on the occasion of a visit to Scotland, in the company of his friend, the Earl of Findlater and Seafield, our author's well established and growing reputation procured for him, from the two Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the unsolicited distinction of a Doctor's degree in Divinity.

In 1760, on occasion of the death of George II., Dr. Chandler preached and published a Sermon containing an eulogy on the deceased monarch, in which he compared him to king David. This gave rise to a pamphlet by some anonymous writer, entitled "The History of the Man after God's own Heart;" placing in the darkest colours all the acts, real or alleged, of oppression, cruelty, lust, and murder, imputed to the Jewish prince; and affecting to represent as a foul libel, and an insult to the memory of a venerated monarch recently committed to the grave, the attempt to draw any parallel between them. Dr. Chandler, in consequence of this attack, wrote a "Review of the History of the Man after God's own Heart, in which the Falsehoods and Misrepresentations of the Historian are exposed and corrected." In this reply, though it was in vain to attempt to palliate or conceal some of the more flagrant and well-known blots in the character and conduct of David, yet he shewed that many of the charges brought against him were grossly exaggerated, others altogether unfounded, or brought forward in ignorance or disregard of the manners and condition of the people, and the state of society

in which he lived; all which should be taken into the account in forming an estimate of the character of a person who lived in a remote age and nation, and under circumstances widely different from any which at present exist. In many instances he also shewed clearly that his 'opponent had been misled by relying implicitly on the common translation; and here his learning and critical skill were brought into the field to great advantage. It must, however, be admitted that he was not only betrayed into too great a warmth of argument, but was led, as is often the case in the ardour of controversy, to go too far into the opposite extreme, and undertake the defence of many things which are altogether incapable of vindication. This is still more remarkably the case with the more detailed and elaborate work which he afterwards published, entitled, "A Critical History of the Life of David, in which the principal Events are ranged in Order of Time;—the chief objections against the character of this prince, and the scripture account of him, and the occurrences of his reign, are examined and refuted, and the Psalms which refer to him explained." This is generally considered as one of the ablest of Dr. Chandler's productions, and perhaps with reason; but certainly his panegyric of his hero is far too unmeasured and indiscriminate; and he is betrayed into coming forward as the advocate, both of actions in the life and reign of David, and of sentiments in the Psalms commonly ascribed to him, which it would have been more discreet in a Christian minister to give up as indefensible, or to content himself with offering such an apology as might be suggested by a reference to the ruder

state of society and the less perfect dispensation under which he lived. It contains, however, much ingenious historical argument, and several admirable specimens of biblical criticism, applied to some of the most difficult and obscure passages of the Old Testament.

This work was chiefly prepared for the press during the author's last illness, and did not make its appearance till after his decease, which happened on the 8th of May, 1766, in his seventy-third year. During the last year of his life, he was visited with frequent returns of a very painful disorder, which he endured with great resignation and Christian fortitude. He repeatedly declared, that to secure the divine felicity promised by Christ was the principal and almost the only thing that made life desirable; that to attain this end he would gladly die; submitting himself entirely to God, as to the time and manner of his death, whose will was most righteous and good; and being persuaded that all was well that ended well for eternity.

Dr. Chandler was a man of extensive learning and eminent abilities, and both his talents and general character were such as to procure for him a powerful influence in the dissenting body of which he was a member. This influence he exercised on many occasions in a manner highly beneficial to the public interest. In particular the valuable fund for relieving the widows and orphans of poor dissenting ministers was his suggestion, and it was mainly in consequence of his exertions and interest that it was established.

In 1768, four volumes of Dr. Chandler's Sermons were published, according to his own di-

rections in his last will; and in 1777, under the care of the Rev. N. White, his successor at the Old Jewry, "A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians, with doctrinal and practical observations; together with a critical and practical Commentary on the two Epistles to the Thessalonians."

In the year 1756, Dr. Chandler promoted the publication of a remarkable posthumous work by Mr. *Moses Lowman*, one of the most learned divines among the Presbyterian Dissenters of that day; though his retired habits and want of popular talents prevented his arriving at much eminence or distinction. The volume contains three tracts, of which the first is entitled, Remarks on the Question, whether the divine Appearances under the Old Testament were Appearances of the true God himself, or only of some other spiritual being representing the True God, and acting in his name; the second, an Essay on the Schechinah, or considerations on the divine appearances mentioned in the Scripture; and the third contains an examination of various Texts of Scripture relating to the Logos. Dr. Chandler seems to have sanctioned this publication by affixing his name to the preface in conjunction with those of Dr. Lardner and Mr. E. Sandercock, and by so doing certainly evinced his candour to a remarkable degree; for they are particularly directed against the Arian notion of a subordinate agent supposed to have been concerned in the creation of the world and in the conduct of the Old Testament dispensation; and expose the insufficiency of the reasons commonly alleged for this opinion in a manner which no Arian, it is imagined, will find it

easy to gainsay. Indeed, one is at a loss to imagine how men of high eminence for learning and acuteness, such as some of those who have espoused this notion certainly were, should have failed to perceive its inconsistency with the whole object and character of the Mosaic economy. For what was this object?—evidently to counteract the prevailing tendency of mankind to idolatry. And how did this tendency originate? To all appearance in an idea that the most High God did not occupy himself with the details of this lower world, but entrusted them to inferior beings, who, by consequence engrossed to themselves the whole attention of those who imagined that the affairs of mankind and the course of events by which they were affected were placed in their hands and at their controul. What more natural, than that they should address their petitions and their worship to those in whose hands their destiny, whether for good or evil, appeared to be placed? This, and this alone, seems for the most part to have been the true origin of all the idolatries of the ancient world. But if the Jewish polity were indeed what some have represented it, far from checking, it would seem only to encourage and promote the very system it is said to have been destined to overthrow.

By the Logos, which dwelt or tabernacled among us, being made flesh, or, as it were, taking up its residence in Jesus as the most glorious and excellent *Schechinah*, we are therefore to understand, according to this writer, no less a being than the one God, the Father; whose wisdom spake in our Lord's discourses, by whose power his mighty works were performed, and whose

spirit was given to him without limit. Mr. Lowman has not formally stated the conclusion deducible from this argument in favour of the simple humanity of Christ; leaving it, we may presume, to the ingenuity of the reader, who could scarcely fail to perceive it as a necessary and unavoidable consequence.

The following allusion to this publication occurs in the preface by Mr. Richard Baron to that curious collection of tracts, entitled "A Cordial for Low Spirits;" which is also remarkable as furnishing the most decisive direct testimony to the Unitarianism of Sir Isaac Newton.

"The brightest and fullest manifestation of this glorious truth (the humanity of Christ) seems to have been reserved by Providence for the honour of this age, and as a most powerful check to the growth of infidelity; such evidences of the humanity of Christ Jesus having been lately produced as many former ages were unaquainted with. For my meaning I refer the curious reader to Mr. Lowman's Tracts, where he will find the Arians beaten out of the main fort which they had long held; whence, of necessity, they are driven to give up the rest. Mr. Lowman led the way, demolishing the outworks of the enemy. Dr. Lardner followed, and cleared the field. No answer has appeared to their writings on this subject; no answer can be given. Dr. Chandler hath confessed that he cannot answer Mr. Lowman; and if *he* cannot, who can?"

Mr. Lowman was born in London in 1679. He

was originally intended for the bar; but soon abandoning all thoughts of that profession, he went to Holland in 1699, and pursued his studies for the Christian ministry at Utrecht and Leyden. In 1710 he was chosen assistant preacher to a dissenting congregation at Clapham, where he continued for the rest of his life, discharging the duties of his station with constancy and regularity, esteemed and beloved by his flock, and respected by all who knew him.

Mr. Lowman was one of the contributors to the valuable religious periodical called the "Occasional Paper," set on foot by the leading Presbyterian ministers of London in 1716; and which deserves notice, not merely from the intrinsic merit of many of its articles, but from the remarkable indication it affords of the increasing prevalence of liberal principles among the rational dissenters of that day; a prevalence which it was doubtless mainly instrumental in promoting to a still greater extent.

No. 1 of vol. ii is a spirited paper on "Orthodoxy," by Mr. Lowman. "I cannot but dislike," says he, "the absurd, narrow, and uncharitable notion of orthodoxy, which has too long set Christians at variance one with another. It is highly arrogant in the Papists; because, though the church of Rome asserts, she is far from proving herself to be infallible; and, therefore, though she is tolerably consistent in calling herself orthodox, and all that differ from her heretics, yet she may be out; there may be great mistakes in the decrees and catechism of Trent. But still I can write against their imposed canons and traditions with some temper, because they proceed

fairly. They say the Bible, without their glosses upon it, is not a sufficient and perfect rule of faith, and that their interpretations of it are as infallibly true as the word of God itself. Grant them these principles on which they go, and then they argue justly, that a man must believe all that their church believes, in order to denominate him orthodox.

“But that men who separate from this church on the foot of a private judgment; that pretend to no infallibility, and own the Bible to be a perfect adequate rule, that needs no additions to eke it out and make it a complete directory; that men that live and breathe upon this principle, and can justify their own conduct by nothing else; that they, while they are engaged in a pretended defiance to this implicit faith, should yet make their own sentiments and darling opinions the standard of orthodoxy, is both an iniquity and a folly not to be endured.

“I never yet could see a list of fundamentals in Christianity. I have heard Protestants, when upbraided by the Romanists for want of unity, plead agreement in fundamentals; and I have heard the Papists hereupon demand such a list; but I never knew any Protestant hardy enough to produce it. That only, in my notion, is a fundamental mistake in religion, which is inconsistent with a good heart and a religious conversation. If a man give any reasonable evidence of his being impressed with the fear of God, and that he is concerned to know and do his will, however he may err, we are not to seat ourselves in God’s throne, and, because he is not religious in our way, reprobate him at once, and conclude

him profane and ungodly. It will be kind to use all the proper methods we can to convince and reclaim him; but to condemn, anathematize, and censure him as a heretic, and then cry, Away with him from the earth, this is the very spirit of the Inquisition, and a conduct worthy only of that shameless church who has no bounds to her claims, nor any pity or remorse to those that dispute them.”*

Mr. L. devoted himself with great diligence to all branches of study connected with his profession, but more especially to Jewish learning and antiquities, in which he became a thorough proficient; justly conceiving that the most important light is thus to be thrown on the doctrines of the New Testament, in which there are continual references and allusions to the rites and customs of the Jews, both those which are founded on the Mosaic law, and such as had been added on the authority of human tradition. The result of these studies he laid before the public in several very curious and valuable publications, particularly a dissertation “on the Civil Government of the Hebrews,” in which the true design and nature of their government are explained, and the justice, wisdom, and goodness of the Mosaic constitution are vindicated; in particular from some unfair and false representations of them in the “Moral Philosopher,” 1740. Also, “A Rationale of the Ritual of the Hebrew Worship;” in which the wise designs and usefulness of that Ritual are explained and vindicated from objections, 1748. He published, in 1745, a Paraphrase and Notes

* See “Historical Proofs and Illustrations of the Hewley Case,” p. 91.

on the Revelation of St. John, in which he was, perhaps, as successful as any other writers have been in divining the true intent of that mysterious book. Mr. Lowman died in 1753, in the seventy-third year of his age. By the account of Dr. Chandler, who preached his funeral sermon, he appears to have been a man of genuine and unaffected piety, and moderate and charitable in his religious principles; but firm and decided in exercising himself the same privilege which he was ready to allow to others, of forming his own judgment.

His habits and manners appear to have been retired, and he was averse to the heat and vehemence of public controversy. Difference of opinion in equally worthy men made no difference in his esteem for them; and he knew mankind too well, to think that all honesty, truth, and good sense, were confined to one party, and shut up in the narrow enclosure of any single denomination of Christians. He loved a good man, in whatever communion he could find him; and he was himself respected and esteemed by many worthy members of the established church, and especially by the principal persons of his own neighbourhood, who cultivated his acquaintance and friendship.

Messrs. Bogue and Bennett, in a short biographical notice of Mr. Lowman, after admitting his claim to commendation as a writer, speak of him as a very poor preacher, and add that "an intelligent man, who was his constant hearer, declared that he could never understand him." The present writer has no means at hand of appealing to other testimony on this subject; but he finds

it difficult to imagine that the same person who was correct and perspicuous in his writings could be habitually unintelligible in the pulpit. The "intelligent" person referred to very probably laboured under some strong theological bias, which prevented him from assenting to Mr. Lowman's conclusions, and perhaps, in some cases, even from perceiving the drift of his arguments, and, therefore, it is possible enough that he might sometimes misunderstand him; but we can hardly place much reliance on the testimony of a man who, by his own account of himself, remained a constant hearer of a preacher whose discourses he could *never* understand.

CALEB FLEMING

WAS a distinguished and active member of the liberal school of dissenting theologians in the middle of the last century, and not an unworthy associate of the eminent men who have been already commemorated. Hence, though his numerous writings, notwithstanding the ability and learning which many of them display, had, for the most part, only a temporary interest, and, consequently, are little read at the present day, his name cannot be altogether passed over in a work whose object is to do honour to those who have been eminently instrumental in promoting the cause of religious truth. We are, unfortunately, obliged to content ourselves with a brief and imperfect outline; which is, however, of such a character as to lead us to believe, that, if the requisite materials were now to be obtained, the life of Fleming would present a much greater variety of incident to impart the kind of interest we expect to find in a biographical memoir, and the absence of which, it is feared, will have been complained of in some of the preceding articles. The exertions which he appears to have made under considerable disadvantages to supply in after-life the deficiencies of an imperfect and desultory education, his early struggles with adverse circumstances, his honourable integrity in the sacrifice of flattering prospects, and in declining powerful patronage, which might, probably, have

led to advancement and distinction, all encourage the persuasion that, if we had the means of filling up this outline as it seems to deserve, we might present both an interesting and a highly valuable picture. It was understood that these means were in the possession of the late Dr. Towers, and that a more detailed memoir of this eminent man might be looked for from his hands : but the expectations of the public were disappointed ; and the present writer can now do nothing more than bring together what has already been made known, accompanied by such a review as may be thought desirable of the permanent memorials which the author has left of himself in his writings.

The subject of this memoir was born at Nottingham, Nov. 4, 1698. His father was engaged in hosiery, then, as now, the staple trade of that town ; his mother, whose name was Buxton, was of an ancient and respectable family in the adjacent county of Derby. He shewed an early taste for literature, which was to a certain degree cultivated and encouraged by his parents. For this purpose he was placed under the care of the Rev. J. Hardy, who for some years kept an academy at Nottingham for a small number of pupils, and by whom he appears to have been introduced to an acquaintance with many branches of knowledge important to the Christian minister. This gentleman is said to have been a man of learning and liberality :* what his own opinions were on controverted questions has not been stated ; but he appears to have adopted with his pupils the more consistent and honourable course usually

* He is said to have afterwards conformed, and taken orders in the church of England.—See Bogue and Bennett, ii. 251.

followed in our academical institutions, of directing their attention to the fountain head of scriptural knowledge; to those who were alone entitled to speak with authority, without seeking to impose the shackles and usurped dominion of human creeds and confessions.

Under the influence of this mode of instruction, young Fleming, though brought up a Calvinist, soon parted with the principles instilled by his early education. What his original destination was, or whether this change in his theological views led to any alteration of it, we have now no means of ascertaining; but it appears that, after leaving Mr. Hardy, he was, for several years, engaged in some secular business at Nottingham, possibly his father's trade, till, in the year 1727, he removed to London. In the mean time, he had married the daughter of Mr. John Harris, of Harstaff, in Derbyshire, by whom he had a family of ten children, one only of whom survived him. In London he became intimate with Mr. Holt, who was many years afterwards mathematical tutor at Warrington. From this friend he received assistance and encouragement in his studies, and acquired further improvement in classical literature, as well as an acquaintance with the Hebrew language. Whether this was, as yet, with a view to his finally entering on the profession of a Christian minister, to which, it is said, he had an early inclination; or merely to assist him in acquiring a more accurate acquaintance with those branches of knowledge in which his tastes and habits of mind led him chiefly to occupy his leisure, we are not informed. Nor does it appear in what mode of life he was occupied during the first years of

his residence in London; all we know is, that it afforded but scanty means of support for a numerous young family, and frequently placed him, as he afterwards used to relate of himself, in sight of real want, though he thanked God it had never quite reached him.

About this time he received an overture, through Dr. W. Harris, to write in defence of the measures of administration, in which case the Doctor told him he was authorized to promise that he would be well provided for. Mr. Fleming, however, notwithstanding his necessitous circumstances, promptly refused, saying he would rather cut off his right hand. Situated as he was, this refusal shewed the strength of his regard to principle and integrity; for he seems not merely to have rejected an immediate resource, but to have given offence to some who were desirous to serve him.

It was not till the year 1738 that he made the final change in his mode of life, and entered on the active discharge of the duties of a Christian minister. He had, before this time, laid in such a store of learning and theological knowledge as well qualified him for this employment; but it is remarkable that the first opportunity for the exercise of his gifts was afforded by a proposition to enter the Established Church. His abilities and acquirements appear in some manner to have attracted the notice of Dr. Thomas, Bishop of Winchester, by whom he was recommended to the patronage of Sir George Fleming, at that time Bishop of Carlisle. This latter prelate actually offered him a presentation to the vicarage of Lazenby, in Cumberland, with the promise of

a further more ample provision. At the same time, Dr. Thomas, apprehending his circumstances to be narrow, very benevolently made him an offer of advancing a handsome sum to defray the expenses of his removal to so great a distance. Mr. Fleming was not wanting in grateful acknowledgments to these worthy prelates for their liberal offers; and, at the time when they were made, he had very pressing reasons for embracing them: but as he entertained conscientious scruples against complying with the terms of conformity, which, after the most mature deliberation, he found invincible, he was obliged, as an honest man, to decline the proposals of his compassionate and friendly patrons. In forming his determination on this subject, he was encouraged by the magnanimity of his wife, who gave him the fullest and tenderest assurances of her cheerful readiness to undergo the most extreme hardships, rather than obtain relief at the expense of his integrity and peace.*

The overture which was thus conscientiously declined by Fleming, would appear to have arisen from the publication of a pamphlet in 1736, entitled "The Fourth Commandment abrogated by the Gospel;" in which he endeavours to shew that this law, enjoining the observance of the seventh day as a day of rest, was binding only on the Jews; but that the law of the sabbath being destroyed, the Christian institution authorizes the Christian's observance of the first day of the week as a religious festival. This pamphlet is dedicated to the Bishop of Carlisle, from no other motive, as he himself declares, than "a piece of lit-

* Aikin's General Biography, art. Fleming.

tle fondness for the credit and reputation which might result on the dedicator from his lordship's being of the same name with him." He goes on to speak of himself and his present circumstances in the following terms :—" I am indeed apprehensive, my Lord, that I shall not escape the censures of many to whom my circumstances and character are known. Some may, perhaps, allege that I have gone out of my province, and have misemployed my time, as being only a layman, who have the affairs of a large family to attend. Nevertheless, I imagine that this charge will not fix very heavily upon me till it is proved, that, while I was composing these sheets, I had an opportunity of doing something else which would have been beneficial to myself or mine."

This pamphlet was shortly succeeded by another, entitled " A Plain and Rational Account of the Sabbath, in reply to Mr. Robert Cornthwaite's further Defence of the Seventh-day Sabbath." They contain a very complete and elaborate view of the arguments on which those are accustomed to rely, who contend that the fourth commandment, *as such*, is in no way binding on Christians, and was, in effect, set aside by the Christian institutions, as we may infer (among other grounds) from the express declaration of St. Paul. (Col. ii. 16.) To Christians the seventh day would have been a commemoration of a season of mourning, terror, and dismay; while the first day of the week is most fitly observed as a holy festival, in remembrance of the glorious event which fully ascertained and established the covenant of grace, and was, in fact, observed as such from the earliest period.

Whether there was not, after all, involved in

Fleming's motives for dedicating this publication to his namesake, the Bishop of Carlisle, a sort of undefined impression that it might be practicable for him, consistently with a just regard for principle and integrity, to accept of his lordship's patronage, may admit of some doubt. If it were so, it would not be the first time that an honest man has not fully understood the state of his own mind, and the practical bearing of his principles, till circumstances arose to put them to the proof. In this pamphlet he speaks of the Logos, distinguished from the Supreme God, as the Being who rested on the seventh day from the work of creation; from which it appears that he was, at this time, already an Arian in theological sentiment. We shall soon see, that the inquiries in which he afterwards engaged led him to abandon this notion, and to embrace the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ. But the Arian view is, at least, clearly inconsistent with the Athanasian creed, and with many other parts of the liturgy of the Church of England; and, independently of any disputed points of doctrine, it is not easy to see how the author of a pamphlet repudiating the fourth commandment, and denying its authority as such over any except the Jews, could, with propriety, recite those precepts in the ordinary public service, and join in the petition, "Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep *this* law."

When the bishop's proposal brought the matter to a point, and imposed on him the necessity of a more rigid and searching examination of his sentiments and motives than he appears to have previously undertaken, our author considered the

question of subscription more carefully, with a view of its bearing on his own conduct; and his own good sense and conscientious regard to principle soon convinced him that he could find no rest for the sole of his foot within the pale of the establishment. He, therefore, respectfully declined the offers made to him; and was soon afterwards induced to assume the exercise of the ministry among the English Presbyterians; almost the only religious community which did not impose on its ministers and members restrictions in his estimation unauthorized by scripture. After preaching occasionally for a short time in different places, he was ordained in 1738 as minister to the congregation at that time assembling in Bartholomew Close, London. Among the ministers concerned in his ordination were Hunt, Chandler, and Benson. Mr. Fleming gave no other confession of faith than this, "that he believed the New Testament writings to contain a revelation worthy of God to give, and of man to receive, and that it should be his endeavour to recommend them to the people in the sense in which he should from time to time understand them." He did not submit to the imposition of hands, which he considered as an unwarrantable mimicry of the apostles, and liable to misconstruction. If it is supposed, as is still too frequently the case, to confer any peculiar character or privileges, or to entitle him who has received it to do any thing in the capacity of a *priest*, or person supposed to have an especial authority and commission from heaven, and entitled thereby to do any thing which another person equally qualified might do as effectually,—if it is sup-

posed to communicate any *validity* to certain ordinances when administered by a person duly ordained, which they would not otherwise possess,—then he conceived it, and we think justly, to be a groundless and pernicious delusion; and a compliance with any outward ceremony which has usually been connected in the popular view with an imagined or pretended right to communicate such powers, ought by all means to be avoided. The frank and open declaration of these sentiments in the terms which have just been quoted well illustrate the character of the man; and it is also a valuable record, as indicating the views on this subject entertained and acted on at this period by several of the most influential men of the denomination to which by this act he attached himself, and who by taking a part in his formal reception into their body not only gave him the right hand of fellowship, but virtually, if not openly, disclaimed all pretensions to sift his creed, or to demand pledges and confessions from future candidates for ordination.

It may, however, be doubted, whether the freedom thus exercised was in all respects acceptable to some of those who had invited him to be their minister, and in whom the old leaven of Presbyterianism, as it had existed a century before in all its rigour, may not yet have been altogether worked out. They may, perhaps, have been startled at the entire overthrow of the barriers against the intrusion of unsound teachers, established by ancient institutions, of which only the shadow or the name was now retained, and also at the liberty asserted by their new minister,

not only of preaching whatever doctrines he then thought right, but of changing those doctrines from time to time, as further inquiries opened to him new views of scripture truth. It is certain that the freedom of his sentiments, and the unreserved manner in which he was accustomed to express them, soon alarmed some of the more timid, and offended the bigoted; and the consequence seems to have been, that, though he possessed talents which, under other circumstances, would have made him a popular preacher, his congregation was diminished, and the income he derived from it became scarcely adequate to the maintenance of his family. Here, however, he continued to officiate till the year 1752, when, on the declining health of the celebrated Dr. Foster, he was chosen assistant to him as morning preacher at Pinners' Hall. On the death of Foster, which took place shortly after, Mr. Fleming was chosen to be his successor; and in this situation he remained till incapacitated by the increasing infirmities of advanced age.

A singular anecdote is mentioned by Mr. Holden,* which deserves to be recorded. "One Lord's day morning, an old gentleman out of Suffolk, — Reynolds, Esq., happening to sleep on a Saturday night in town at an inn in Bishopsgate Street, came to Pinners' Hall. After service he desired the clerk to wait on him at his inn the next morning. He accordingly went. Mr. Reynolds inquired whether the person he had heard succeeded Dr. Foster, and whether he always preached with that freedom? He told him, Yes.

* See a short Memoir of Dr. Fleming, Monthly Repository, O. S., xiii. 410.

About four or five months after, this gentleman died, and left his estate to Dr. Scott, a physician, and a legacy of a hundred pounds to Mr. Fleming, under the description of 'the gentleman who succeeded Dr. Foster at Pinners' Hall, and who speaks deliberately.' Mr. Fleming observed, that he could not but look upon it as a very remarkable providence;—that he could not pretend to determine what were the motives which operated on the mind of the testator, but could easily imagine some divine impression every way consistent with the freedom of his own volitions, and analogous to the plan of one wise and good universal system. He added, *that he would not on any consideration be denied the pleasure of so directing the sense he had of his own dependence on, and his obligations to, the Supreme Governor."*

These and similar expressions, though to some they may appear to savour of a visionary enthusiasm, are yet surely based on the principles of a genuine Christian philosophy. The belief in a general Providence, governing the world by uniform laws, is not inconsistent with the notion of a particular Providence, which regards not only general results, but the condition, present and future, of each individual, and the adaptation of every event that occurs to promote the interests of each and of all as being subject to the express direction and controul of the one Supreme. The inconsistency arises only when we suffer ourselves to be so far misled by views derived from the unavoidable imperfections of human power and knowledge, and hastily transferred to our conceptions of the Divine government, as to suppose that He who sees the end from the begin-

ning, and with whom the great and the little of created things are equally insignificant, cannot or will not condescend to take immediate cognizance of every thing that happens in his vast universe. We are apt to suppose that the general principles which we call the laws of nature are so many agents, or, at least, so many moving powers impressed on the great machine of creation, by which the various changes and phenomena we behold have been brought to pass without the further superintendence of Him who made it;—whereas they are more justly viewed as being merely the modes of the divine operations; an expression of the order in which it has pleased Him that the successive events which constitute the course of nature should follow each other in the relation of physical cause and effect; and in conformity to which the energy of divine power is incessantly exerted for the government of the world in bringing about the various changes which it exhibits.

A pamphlet which Mr. Fleming published about this time, in reply to Thomas Chubb, a noted sceptical writer, who had adopted the ordinary notion of a general providence and attempted to derive from it an argument against revelation, places this question in an ingenious, and, on the whole, a just and satisfactory point of view. It forms one of a series of publications by our author connected with the controversy so actively carried on at this period with the principal deistical writers of the day, and in which, as we have already seen, several other dissenting divines of the same school greatly distinguished themselves. Fleming seems to have singled out Chubb as his

chief opponent; and his tracts shew much acuteness and ingenuity. His animadversions on that writer's discourse on Miracles are particularly deserving of notice, as more nearly approaching to the doctrine since so ably maintained by Mr. Farmer on that subject, than was common with the leading theologians of his time. His argument is by this means freed from the embarrassment in which Foster, Chandler, and others are always more or less involved by their concession of the admitted possibility of real miracles being wrought by subordinate and even by evil spirits, for the promotion of their own wicked purposes.

It is to be regretted that these publications, being for the most part called forth by circumstances and controversies of a temporary and personal character, have failed to attract the degree of permanent attention to which their intrinsic merit would entitle them. At this distance of time it is not easy to judge how far it was worth while to take so much notice of the productions of a man like Chubb. Much would, of course, depend on the extent of their circulation, and the sort of impression they appeared to be making at the time on the public mind. Perhaps our posterity may, in the same way, find it hard to believe that the lucubrations of Owen and Carlile were worth the trouble which is now bestowed on them; and, in general, the answerers of such men must be contented with the hope of being useful in their own day and generation, without seeking for the reward of lasting fame.

About the year 1742, Mr. Fleming published a tract on Baptism, entitled, "Plunging a sub-

ject of Bigotry when made essential to Baptism ;” which was soon followed by “ A Plea for Infants, or the Scripture Doctrine of Water-Baptism stated.” These tracts presently excited a controversy, in which our author returned several times to the charge in reply to sundry opponents, particularly the Rev. J. Burroughs and Mr. D. Dobell. In these publications he defends the cause of infant baptism with great zeal and perseverance, and urges all the arguments which are usually brought forward to vindicate or recommend this practice, not only from the expediency and propriety of the thing, considered in its moral influence on the minds of the parents, but on the alleged footing of authority derived from the supposed uninterrupted tradition of the church, from the presumed practice, or at least connivance of the apostles, and from the real or supposed analogy between this rite and that of circumcision, as practised under the law of Moses. Some of these arguments appear to us plausible, while others will scarcely bear examination. The main strength of the pædo-baptists’ cause (provided that the “ previous question” is assumed, that water-baptism is to be received as an ordinance of permanent obligation in the church at all) is derived from the consideration, that it must be practised as a rite of *initiation* ; whereas adult baptism seems to invert the natural order, when administered to persons who have *already* gone through a course of religious instruction and education. It seems preposterous, *first* to instruct, and *then* to admit into the school. When the question is not of the first introduction of a convert, but of the offspring of Christian parents,

it seems as if there was no period at which this formal initiation could take place too early; because a child's moral education commences from his birth, and ought from the first to be conducted on Christian principles, and with an express reference to his character of an heir of the promises, entitled to all the privileges of a Christian disciple. To wait till a child is able to think and answer for himself would be to sacrifice the period of life when the most essential and valuable parts of a religious education ought to be carried on. But in the absence of any direct evidence of the apostolic authority of this practice at all corresponding to that which we have in the Mosaic law for the rite of circumcision, it seems that this ground of argument will only prove the expediency and beneficial tendency of the practice in its moral influence on the parties concerned, and not its binding obligation as an ordinance or sacrament. It is here that the argument for infant baptism may appear imperfect;—especially if its *validity* is at the same time insisted on, as an instrument for working, we know not what regeneration in the subject of it;—for mending God's work at the will of a priest, and washing out by some cabalistical process the stains of original sin. For an ordinance which is supposed to shew such proofs as these of its efficacy we are surely justified in requiring a more precise and indubitable authority than any to be found in the New Testament. On the other hand, the opposite party are not without reason called on to produce a single scriptural example of the adult offspring of Christian parents being introduced into the church by the

outward ceremony which they recommend and practise.

“I have pleaded,” says Mr. Fleming, “for the baptism of infants, as what I now think may be supported on the scripture plan; at the same time, I have supposed the faith of adult persons necessarily pre-requisite to their baptism. But this faith, in the case of converts, the only adults of whose baptism we read any thing in the New Testament, is merely that which leads to an acknowledgment of the authority of the teacher, and a consequent admission into the list of his disciples,—not that which ‘cometh by hearing,’ and implies a more complete knowledge of the principles of his doctrines, such as can be acquired only by a continued and assiduous attendance on his instructions. I have concluded, that the scripture history of facts will support the right of infant children to baptism, on the faith of their parents, since several households were baptized on the faith of their heads. I have further observed, that the pre-requisite, faith, did not necessarily imply virtuous character, but a persuasion only that Jesus was the Christ, which being professed, did entitle men to baptism—and hence I have concluded that baptism was no more than a rite which initiated men into a kingdom, polity, or state of privileges; to which the infants of all professing Christians are entitled by their birth and situation. On the contrary, adult-baptizers suppose virtuous moral character, and a very competent knowledge of the Christian doctrines, as pre-requisites to baptism. This demand of theirs appears to me to rise far above the first, the pure gospel-state of things; for

when the gospel was first published, those who embraced it were frequently told by the apostles, of its being the effect of the free grace of God that they had been called and admitted into that kingdom, and not to any furniture of knowledge, or any works of righteousness which they had done. They were admitted into a state of favour, of life or privileges *antecedent* to any respect had to their virtue or obedience.*

Mr. Fleming was a near neighbour and intimate friend of Dr. Lardner during the latter part of that eminent man's life. They had almost constant intercourse, and the influence of the new views he derived from his venerable and learned friend are very evident in our author's later publications. We have already observed, that his earlier writings shew him, at the time of his entrance on the ministry, to have approached most nearly to the Arian sentiment. At what precise period he abandoned these views does not clearly appear; but before he quitted Bartholomew Close he avowed his change in a series of lectures on the introduction to St. John's Gospel. He expected, he says, that the consequence of this avowal would be the secession of some of his hearers; which, however, does not seem to have taken place. Some years afterwards, he brought the subject forward in a more formal manner in a dissertation entitled "Considerations on the Logos;" in which he proposes an interpretation of this passage, founded on the principles maintained by Mr. Lowman, in his Essay on the Schechinah, and by Dr. Lardner, in his celebrated Letter on

* Tracts on Baptism, Intro. p. 4.

the Logos. "The Word of God," he considers as expressing "the manifestative will of God, however or whenever made known;" so that the term is applicable to any sensible means which may be resorted to for the purpose of communicating this will, or making it known to mankind. The word "became flesh," when the man Jesus had the word, that is the wisdom and power of God residing with him. But that it did not become any part of the person of Christ (if such an expression is intelligible), is evident from his invariably ascribing his supernatural discernment, his all-penetrating knowledge, his astonishing wisdom and power, to the Father. The sense in which our author thus understands the term, in his opinion not only sets aside the doctrine of the Trinity, but quite annihilates the idea of the pre-existence of Christ. It was the divine power, the power of the Father, as he repeatedly declared, which dwelt in him, and did the works which proved him to be the Messiah. "An apparent advantage it must be of to any one, in reading the Gospels, to preserve in his own mind, pure and unadulterated, an idea of the divine unity; namely, that there is but one living and true God, of necessary, everlasting, and unchangeable existence, without body, parts, or passions; of wisdom, power, and goodness infinite; the maker, preserver, and governor of all things visible and invisible. This would secure the human mind from all those wild and unreasonable opinions, which divide, disturb, and distract the whole Christian professing world. Among other extravagances, Popery could never have found where to set the sole of her foot, if the divine *unity* had

been preserved pure and uncorrupt. That monstrous, detestable superstition was erected on men's depraving this first principle of all religious worship! for when once Christians had learnt to imagine the Godhead divided into three persons, and one of those persons into two natures; when they could once conceive of the *Divine Logos* as the soul of Jesus Christ, they were then prepared to embrace any fanciful opinion that could be grafted on these most absurd principles. We are thus enabled to collect the genuine *original* of that deformity which now sits on the face of the Christian profession. Would we then contribute all we can to restore the lost simplicity and purity of the Gospel profession? it must be by contemplating the man Christ Jesus as the temple of the divine word, and by so reverencing his instructions as to be daily trained by them unto virtue and glory.*

In 1763 Mr. Fleming published an excellent pamphlet, entitled "The Doctrine of the Eucharist considered," containing, in a short compass, an exposure of the follies and superstitions which have been associated with this simple rite, and the most sound and rational account of its original design and beneficial tendency when celebrated with right sentiments, dispositions, and views. In particular he well exposes the groundless pretensions of priests and churches to sit in judgment on their fellow-christians, to place barriers in the way of access to the Lord's table, and demand from candidates for admission confessions of faith, or "experiences" drawn up by or for

* Considerations on the Logos, p. 39.

them; a fertile source of fanaticism on the one hand, or of hypocrisy on the other. "To his own master every one standeth or falleth." It is the duty of each individual to examine himself as to his motives and views in this as in every other religious observance, that it may be productive of its intended moral and spiritual benefit; but this is a duty which he cannot delegate to another, and he is neither enabled nor empowered to judge his brother. The perpetual obligation of this service is well inferred upon its commemorative intention, and the universal and perpetual interest of the great events commemorated. "The beneficial ends attainable from the celebration of the Eucharist by the first Christians, are equally yet attainable, and will remain so while the Christian is exposed to danger by the impressions of this material system; while any trials of his faith and patience remain; or so long as a finished example of humility, resignation, and fortitude can avail him of benefit, so long the religious celebration of the Eucharist will be found divinely useful to the Christian."* No one who believes that Christ spake with an intention to be obeyed by all his followers when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," can reasonably decline to comply with this injunction; more especially if he believes the ordinance to have this simple end, and this end *only* in view,—to refresh and enliven our remembrance of the death and resurrection of our Lord.

It will be naturally concluded, that one so well accustomed to exercise the right of free inquiry

* Doctrine of the Eucharist, p. 38.

in his own person, and to apply it to its most valuable practical purposes, would be equally prompt in vindicating the right itself; and we are, therefore, not surprised to find in the long list of his publications several which have an immediate reference to the various controversies which arose in his time in connexion with this important subject. He considered the interference of human power in matters of religion as one main source of all the corruptions which have arisen in the church, and was ready on all suitable occasions to record his protest against it. In the unavailing struggle of the Dissenters to obtain from Sir R. Walpole's administration the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts he took an active part, especially in a spirited reply to an anonymous real or pretended Dissenter, who had been insidiously endeavouring to throw cold water on the exertions of his brethren. He also wrote a comment on Warburton's celebrated "Alliance between Church and State," which, among other proofs of its merit, seems to have been honoured with a considerable share of the sort of polite attention which that eminent controversialist was accustomed to bestow on his opponents.

In the year 1769, our author received from the University of St. Andrews the degree of Doctor in Divinity. Among his papers (as we learn from Mr. Holden*), there was found the following memorandum on this subject: "By a letter I received from my dear friend, the Rev. Dr. W. Dalrymple, of Ayr, in North Britain, dated March

* Monthly Repository, xiii. 411.

22, 1769, I was surprised with the account of the University of St. Andrews having conferred on me the academical degree of Doctor in Divinity. This gave me great concern, not only from a consciousness of my defect of merit, but from always having looked on such diplomas with a real dislike. I would have rejected the compliment, had not one of the best friends I then had in the world (Thomas Hollis, Esq., who instantly put it into the public papers) on whose judgment I could most rely in matters of decorum and delicacy, absolutely insisted on my acceptance of it." On receiving the diploma he wrote the following acknowledgment to the heads of the University:

" Hoxton Square, April 6, 1769.

"Gentlemen,—Though I am ignorant of the motive you had to honour me with the unmerited degree of D. in D., yet I am able to assure you, that those abilities which God has given me have been ever devoted to the service of truth and liberty; never once resigning the right of private judgment to any human authority, nor consenting to sacrifice conscience on the altar of human emolument. I take this occasion to congratulate you on the advances liberty is making in the kingdom of Scotland, and on the many excellent publications from your countrymen. I wish prosperity to the University of St. Andrews, and should rejoice to render it any service.

" I am, with the greatest respect,

" Gentlemen,

" Your most obliged obedient servant,

" CALEB FLEMING."

We will hope that none of the parties concerned were troubled with any misgivings that they had *made a mistake* in thus distinguishing this uncompromising champion of truth and liberty, and of private judgment in opposition to all human authority.

Dr. Fleming was now arrived at an age when it might be expected that he would be desirous to rest from his labours. He continued, however, to take his usual active interest in the several spirit-stirring events of the time, and various tracts on questions connected with the interests of "truth and liberty" continued to proceed from his prolific pen, particularly one under the assumed signature of *Philothorus*, entitled "Religion not the Magistrate's Province;" occasioned by the application of the Dissenting ministers to Parliament for relief from the obligation of subscription to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England, by which they were still legally bound, though comparatively few of them had complied with it in fact. It contains a just and forcible statement of the argument, as proceeding from one who fully understood and was determined to act upon it; concluding as follows: "If the author of this plea is not mistaken, he has given full proof that the civil magistrate has no rightful claim of exercising authority in the province of religion. He has, he trusts, neither written, nor appeared to have written, with any narrow confined party views; or with design either dastardly to suppress or sophistically to disguise truth; or to subserve any other cause than that of religion. He has no by-ends to serve; he is no sectary; he glories in no name

but that of a Christian; and as he is conscious of pleading so divine a cause on his own mere motive, he pleaseth himself with the approbation of the great God, and with the concurrence of all the unprejudiced, the liberal, and the generous of his countrymen; and will conclude with that excellent collect, 'O Almighty God, who hast built thy church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit, BY THEIR DOCTRINE, that we may be made a holy temple, acceptable unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'"

Dr. F. preached his last sermon at Pinners' Hall the first Lord's day in December, 1777, and died July 21, 1779, in the 81st year of his age. In this discourse he is said to have expressed himself as follows: "I close these my public labours in the pleasing hope of receiving from Christ's ministrations divine advantage when flesh and heart shall fail me; and that he will approve my labours, as having been faithful in a few things. I would ascribe to him all the honour due to an exalted Prince, the Christian's One Lord and Saviour of the world; supreme worship alone being paid to the One God."

JOHN TAYLOR,

OF Norwich,—best known under that designation, he having spent the most active, and brilliant, as well as the happiest portion of his life in that city,—deserves, and has always received, an honourable place among the most learned divines of the last century. His title to this rank has been generally acknowledged and recognized both by Churchmen and Dissenters; by those who differed from him most widely, as well as by those who agreed with him, in theological sentiments.

He was born at or near Lancaster, in the year 1694. His father, who was a timber-merchant there, was a member of the Church of England; but his mother was a Dissenter. From his earliest years he shewed a strong disposition to engage in the ministry of the Gospel among Dissenters, in which he afterwards so eminently distinguished himself, and served the cause of religion and of truth. This appears from his own private memoranda, in which he has thus recorded the views with which he was actuated while prosecuting his studies: “I have always,” says he, “from my first acquaintance with the holy office, been desirous to engage in it, if such a thing might possibly be; and when it seemed at the greatest distance from me, I could not but cast a wishful though despairing look at it; and, at present,

blessed be God, I think I could refuse the greatest honours, preferments, and pleasures, proposed as temptations, to make me drop my present resolutions. I hope I am in some measure qualified for the work, though important. I have no learning to boast of, yet I trust I have so much as, by the assistance of God, and by diligent application, may capacitate me to be useful, among plain simple people especially." He received his theological education in an academy at Whitehaven, conducted by Dr. Dixon; from which school also issued Dr. Caleb Rotheram, Dr. Benson, and other eminent Presbyterian divines. His devotion to Hebrew literature began at a very early period of his life. Among his MSS. is a Hebrew grammar, compiled for his own use, and finished when he was only eighteen years of age.

In the year 1715, having completed his academical studies, he entered upon the ministerial office at Kirkstead, in Lincolnshire, where he remained for eighteen years, notwithstanding that it seems to have been a situation of great poverty and obscurity, and ill suited, in many respects, to a man of such high and distinguished acquirements as he afterwards proved himself to possess, and which so well fitted him for a more honourable and conspicuous post. His ordination, as "a preaching Presbyter," took place on the 11th day of April, 1716, and was conducted by the ministers of Derbyshire. The original instrument of his ordination is preserved by his descendants, and to it is attached a memorandum of the substance of his examination on that occasion.

Kirkstead being a district of a peculiar character, formerly the possession of the Abbey of

that name, and out of Episcopal jurisdiction, the chapel had continued in, or fallen into, the possession of the Dissenters, whose ministers conducted all the religious service of the district, the endowment being the gift of the former owners of the estate. The chapel registers have not been preserved; but transcripts of portions have been transmitted to Mr. Taylor's descendants, as evidence of the acts affecting their own descent; and it is worthy of notice, that he appears, from them, to have solemnized matrimony among his hearers. On the frequent discussions which took place lately on the subject of the marriage law, it was much questioned whether the Dissenters did, in practice, however entitled in law, solemnize matrimony in their congregations before the passing of the Marriage Act which confined the right to the Established Church. At Kirkstead it clearly appears that the minister was in the habit of marrying. He did so, in some measure, from necessity, there being no church or chapel of the Establishment attached to the district. In fact, Dr. Taylor was himself married there, on the 13th day of August, 1717, to Mrs. Elizabeth Jenkinson, a widow of Boston; and it was from such marriage that the widely-spread line of his descendants sprang.

In 1726 he had an invitation to Pudsey, near Leeds, which, on mature deliberation, he declined to accept. In order the better to determine this point, he drew up an accurate statement of the advantages and disadvantages of each side of the question, in which the recommendations of his settlement at Kirkstead are represented in no very attractive light. He complains that he is

among a people not only illiterate, but generally sluggish; little addicted to reading, of no ingenuity, and even insensible of their duty to a minister; also that his salary is very small, only twenty-five pounds *per annum*. Though the balance of the account would seem to be clearly in favour of Pudsey, Mr. Taylor remained patiently for nearly seven years longer in this remote and obscure situation, storing his mind with the treasures of biblical learning, and helping out his narrow income, in some degree, by keeping a small school. Some reference to his engagement in this way occurs in the following letter*, which, on other accounts, is worth preserving as a curious indication of the views he entertained at that period on various topics, which were then deeply agitating the dissenting body; and also as exhibiting the obscure and straitened condition of one who afterwards forced his way, by his natural talents and by indefatigable industry, to considerable distinction.

“To Mr. Tho. Johnson, at Mr. John Brooksbank’s, Merchant in London.

“Dear Mr. Johnson,—I received yours about a month ago, much to my satisfaction; and should have returned an answer ere now, but could not find time, at one sitting, to be so large and particular as yours required. Most readily shall I comply with the overtures of your love and affection, to keep a strict correspondence with you by letters, in hopes I shall see you at London in due time, if God permit. I rejoice much in your

* See Universal Theological Magazine, Sept. 1804. Mr. Johnson was a native of Kirkstead, in humble life, and, in town, joined the congregation of Mr. J. Palmer, of Hackney.

being settled in a family so good and honourable, and in your endeavours and resolution to improve the divine favours bestowed upon you. You do well to covet useful knowledge. The study of the Holy Scriptures will turn to the best account, both as to this and the other world. You cannot use too much caution in choosing books; both time and money are lost upon mean and indifferent authors. Blessed be God, we are pretty well furnished with the labours of learned and pious men upon the Bible. But I think we yet want a practical comment upon the whole Bible, so contrived for the use of families as that a chapter may conveniently be read, with the exposition, morning and night, and yet take in the main of what is necessary to enlighten the head and better the heart. Mr. Henry is quite too large and tedious for this purpose. He that takes pains with him, and is punctual in reading a sufficient part, can't go through the Scripture, as I think, in less than five or six years; whereas it is a great advantage to have the several parts of God's word presented to our thoughts in a quicker succession. Besides, certain it is, Mr. Henry did not sweat much for the exact sense of the text in some parts of the work. Indeed, how could he? The work itself was too much for one hand; and Mr. Henry, it is well known, took a great deal of pains in his public ministerial labours. He that writes even a practical comment upon the Scriptures must, notwithstanding, deal in criticism; otherwise how should he deduce practical conclusions with any certainty or satisfaction? I have, indeed, laid a design of abridging Mr. Henry, and have

prosecuted it as far as the prophet Jonah; and should willingly carry it on, and am, by several of my friends, encouraged to do so. But the work is at present at a stand; for such are my circumstances, that I have not yet had an opportunity of purchasing Mr. Henry's volumes, and I can no longer carry on my former trade of *borrowing*. But I am in hopes shortly to be furnished with that and other books necessary for the undertaking. As for the time of having any part of it ready for the press, I can say nothing. The price will be as low as I can bring it; for, if I can therein do any service to the interest of Christ's kingdom, I am not at all solicitous about my own.

“My hands are, indeed, at present pretty full of business; for, besides my ordinary ministerial employment, I take boys to table and teach. If you know of any, Mr. Johnson, who would have their children instructed in the languages, writing, arithmetick, in a good, wholesome air, in a country retirement, out of the way of the common temptations of the age, where they should in every respect be carefully looked after, and well done to, if you should recommend them to me, I hope, through the blessing of God upon my endeavours, you would never be ashamed of it. We are situated pleasantly, at some distance from a little country village, out of the sight or hearing of any thing that's vicious, whereby youth may be corrupted, near the navigable river which runs between Boston and Lincoln. My wife is particularly well qualified for ordering and encouraging children.

As to the unhappy differences among the London ministers,* I think I should not have subscribed had I been among them, because I am not satisfied that it is a means sanctified and appointed by God, for either finding out or ascertaining the truth. On the other hand, I am sure it has been grievously abused from the first times of Christianity, to the dividing of Christians, and destroying that love and mutual forbearance which is the distinguishing character of our holy religion, and the only bottom upon which the tranquillity of the church can be rightly settled.

As to choice of commentators, I think it will be well if you buy Mr. Pool's Annotations, and content yourself with that at present; for in this case, variety confounds rather than instructs; and if you had, and could use, all the commentators in the world, perhaps you would remain as much unsatisfied of the sense of some texts as you were before you meddled with them. Blessed be God, what is necessary is plain. Or, if you should procure, and carefully read over, Dr. Prideaux's Connection of the History of the Old and New Testament (a work well known) before you buy any Commentator, you would certainly find your advantage in it; for it would give you a clear view of the main of scripture history, and would, in my opinion, be a good help in reading your

* See the Prefatory Discourse to Rawson's case. Mr. Taylor notices the decision at Salters' Hall, though not very accurately. No doubt he here refers to that important occasion. He there adds, in more decided language than he had used in the above letter, "This should always be remembered to their honour, as being the only instance, perhaps, that can be produced out of church history, for many centuries, of any synod of ministers declaring in favour of religious liberty."

Bible. There are, indeed, many things in it which are nothing to you. But you will find a great deal in it for the right understanding of Scripture. I would have you make yourself in a tolerable degree master of that before you meddle with any other. Read it as closely as you can. The reading many books at once, or hastily, is the way to get no good by reading books. Get the best edition, if you get any. Pray sir, excuse this hasty, confused letter. You may by it, at least, see I am most willing to revive and improve our old love and acquaintance. Pray, sir, let me hear from you, as soon as your business will permit; and you shall find me always ready, according to my leisure, to deal with you in this epistolary traffic. May All-sufficiency bless, protect, guide, guard, and prosper you in spirituals and temporals, is the hearty prayer of,

Your affectionate,

Kirkstead,
April 29th, 1724.

JOHN TAYLOR.

In 1733, a larger sphere of usefulness, and the opportunity of making his talents honourably known to the world, were afforded Mr. Taylor by his removal to Norwich. Here he found a congregation much more suited to his tastes; and already actuated by a liberality of views and feelings, which disposed them to leave him unshackled by any confessions or subscriptions to human creeds, and not only free to pursue the unbiassed suggestions of his own understanding, in his search after religious truth, but at full liberty to declare the results of his investigations both to the public and to themselves.

We have no direct evidence of the precise state of opinion in the congregation on controverted topics before and at the time when they made this selection. It is probable that the same progress of opinion—certainly the same strong objection to all restrictions on religious inquiry and conviction—had long characterized the Presbyterians in Norwich, as had been general among their brethren in other parts of England, from at least the commencement of the century. From the date of the Toleration Act, (about which time Dr. Collings, the ejected minister, died,) Mr. Taylor had been preceded by three ministers, besides the Rev. Peter Finch, to whom he became colleague and who had, singularly enough, been colleague to all three, his ministry having begun very soon after the Toleration Act. Mr. Finch survived, and continued for some time in cordial co-operation with his new associate, about whose opinions there was, at least, no doubt; and the traces, therefore, are not perceptible of any material variations of opinion.

In fact, Mr. Taylor's leading distinction from the greater portion of his brethren of that day consisted not so much in the freedom of his opinions, in which many went considerably beyond him, as in his plan of more explicit and open dealing with some of the important topics of religious investigation, instead of following the very prevalent example of abstaining altogether from their discussion. We find, therefore, that, on his joining the Norwich congregation, he considered it proper that a perfect understanding should be established; and that, in particular, they should together examine into the received opinions, with

reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, in order to form some distinct and understood conclusions on the subject. With this view his congregation, at his suggestion, entered upon a careful reading and examination of Dr. Clarke's "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity;" having previously engaged in two solemn meetings for prayer for the divine assistance in their work.

It may be proper to observe, that, though this last fact renders it probable that some at least of the parties in question did not, at this time, coincide with the sentiments of Dr. Clarke's book, it is not in itself any proof that they were far distant from them. Doubtless the spirit in which "prayer meetings" have been frequently conducted, is only calculated, as indeed it is intended, to confirm the parties in their present notions, whatever these may be; but there surely can be no reason why we may not, and many why we should, pray to be preserved from prejudice and error; and for grace so to exercise the best powers which God has given us in the study of his word, that we may be protected from mischievous delusion, and led into all important and necessary truth; and there can be no occasion when pious and truly candid minds will be more disposed to do this, than when they are invited to enter on a course of inquiry which *may* end in proving that the most cherished opinions which they have hitherto identified with the basis of their hopes and prospects as Christians are a corruption of the pure simplicity of the Gospel, and in leading them to embrace, as divine truth, what they had formerly shunned as dangerous error.

From that time forward, at any rate, the opi-

nions of the congregation were avowed and known to be in unison with those of their pastor; and a few, whose convictions had always been, and continued to be, Calvinistic, withdrew, on its appearing that the decided course taken by the main body rendered undesirable a continuance of a union which could only be nominal. At the same time, Mr. Taylor prepared, for the use of the younger part of the congregation, a "Scripture Catechism," as better suited to its object, and to the prevalent views which they professed, than the Assembly's Catechism.

Mr. Taylor's first publication was a prefatory discourse to a statement of the case of Mr. Joseph Rawson. This gentleman was excluded from communion with a congregational church at Nottingham, for refusing, after suspicions were entertained of his heterodoxy, to answer in other than scriptural language the following question put to him by the minister, "Whether Jesus Christ is the one true supreme God, the same with the Father in Nature, and equal with him in all divine perfections." The publication appeared in 1737, without our author's name; and contains the most just and manly sentiments on the Common Rights of Christians. It gives a brief sketch of the rise and progress of those corruptions which led to the growth and establishment of POPERY, which he well describes as consisting not merely in the political and ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop of Rome, but in the assertion and exercise of the pretension, wherever vested, of lording it over the consciences of others; of making inquisition into the faith of our fellow-disciples, and imposing on them an outward conformity to creeds

and confessions of our own or of any human devising. This unwarrantable and unchristian domination, by whomsoever assumed, in his opinion comprehends the essence and most pernicious character of **POPERY**: with whatever earnestness such parties may disclaim the relationship, they are children of antichrist, and display the characteristic features of the man of sin.

He first traces the advance and decline of **ROMISH POPERY**; which being partially overthrown by the early reformers in separating from the church of Rome, they set up a similar system of arbitrary domination and imposition on the consciences of man, which he justly stigmatizes by the epithet of **PROTESTANT POPERY**, "which, though in some respects better than the Romish, is yet more inconsistent, because it renounceth infallibility, yet imposeth and persecuteth as if infallible; rejecteth human authority, and yet in many cases pleadeth and resteth upon it; and, lastly, permitteth the Scriptures to be read but not understood, or, which is all one, to be understood only in the sense of schemes formed and established by men." Thus did these men build again the things which they had destroyed, and make themselves transgressors against the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Against this Protestant popery the dissenters manfully declared themselves; but no sooner were they confirmed in their own liberties by the Act of Toleration, than some, in the exercise of their newly acquired freedom, saw reason to abandon or deviate from the tenets of their fathers; while others, tenacious of received opinions, stiffly opposed the free inquiry which introduced the "new notions." This

is DISSENTING POPERY. Of the spirit and tendency of this dissenting popery the narrative thus introduced to the public afforded a very apt and illustrative specimen. It is not necessary to enter into the particulars of this affair; suffice it to say, that it is an example of what may be expected frequently to occur when men are not only persuaded that an exact conformity to their own little peculiarities is essential to salvation, but are invested by the constitution of their church with the power to demand from individuals a confession of their faith as the condition of Christian communion, and to inflict ecclesiastical censures upon those who do not come exactly up to their standard.

In the following year Mr. Taylor published, with his name, a sequel to this publication, entitled "A further Defence of the Common Rights of Christians;" entering at greater length into the argument to prove the sufficiency and perfection of Scripture, as the rule of faith without the aid of human creeds, confessions, &c.*

In 1740 appeared the first edition of his celebrated work on ORIGINAL SIN. This is the performance by which the author is chiefly known as a controversial theologian; and it entitles him, in that capacity, to a high and distinguished rank. It is admitted, by common consent, to be a treatise of great learning and ability, and is referred to by both parties as a standard work. It is divided into three parts; in the first of which all those places of Scripture which do expressly speak of the consequences of the first transgres-

* This Tract has been lately republished, and may be found in the Catalogue of the Unitarian Association.

sion are distinctly considered. In the second, the principal passages of Scripture which have by divines been applied in support of the common scheme of original sin are particularly and impartially examined. The author here takes for his guide the "Assembly's Larger Catechism," and examines in order the texts which are cited by it as proofs of the several propositions advanced; reasonably assuming that such a select body of learned and judicious men may well be supposed to have given us the precise sense of the article, and the main evidence that can be adduced from Scripture in support of it. In the third part, he answers some objections and queries; and considers the supposed connexion of the doctrine of original sin with other parts of religion, particularly redemption and regeneration.

The work contains much excellent criticism and powerful argument; and we are inclined to think, that the impression left by the whole upon a candid, unprejudiced reader will be, that it would have justified the author in carrying out his conclusion to a greater length than he has chosen to pursue it. At all events, the doctrine opposed, as we find it laid down in the received formularies of orthodoxy, seems to be rendered utterly untenable. Whether it was necessary to adopt the literal interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis as an historical narrative, or to concede the introduction of death as passing not only upon Adam, but upon all his descendants, as a consequence of his transgression, merely because this hypothesis affords the easiest exposition of an obscure passage in the Epistle to the Romans, are questions on which different opinions

will be entertained by those who admit the accuracy of the writer's views in general.

The following ingenious illustration gives a very precise and distinct statement of our author's views of this part of this subject:

“That judgment which was pronounced upon Adam for his sin came upon all men; or, the Judge decreed that the sentence passed upon Adam should as to the things inflicted, in themselves considered, light upon his posterity. Just as if a father for some irregularity in his first child should determine to lay a restraint upon him in diet, dress, or diversions, and at the same time should judge it expedient to make it a rule with all the other children he might afterwards have. In this instance, it is easy to see how the *judgment to condemnation* pronounced upon the offence of the first-born cometh upon the other children, even before they are brought into the world; without any injustice, nay, perhaps, with a great deal of goodness, on the father's part. Upon the first it is a proper punishment; on the second it cometh as a wholesome discipline; and yet, through the offence of one, they are debarred some pleasures or enjoyments. By the offence of one, the *judgment to condemnation* cometh upon all the rest; by one child's offence, restraint reigneth; and by one child's disobedience the many that come after him are made sinners or sufferers; as they are deprived of some enjoyments which they might be fond of, but which the Father saw, every thing considered, would not be for their good.” *

* Scripture Doctrine, &c., p. 66.

“According to my observation,” (says Jonathan Edwards, in the preface to his celebrated defence of this doctrine of original sin, itself one of the ablest works, if not the very ablest, on that side of the question) “no one book has done so much towards rooting out of these western parts of New England the principles and scheme of religion maintained by our pious and excellent forefathers, the divines and Christians who first settled this country, and alienating the minds of many from what, I think, are evidently some of the main doctrines of the Gospel, as that which Dr. Taylor has published against the doctrine of original sin.”

Answers to this work were, soon after, published by Watts, Jennings, and Wesley; the latter of whom deals in an excess of theological vituperation, to which he has rarely given way on other occasions, branding his opponent with the opprobrious epithets of heretic, deist, and worst than deist! To Watts and Jennings the author replied, in a supplement to the second edition of his Treatise; which contained a very judicious review of the whole controversy, and particularly an acute and unanswerable exposure of the absurdity of the common notion, that Adam was in some sort (as it is expressed in the language of technical theology) the *federal head* or representative of the whole race of mankind; a notion not less devoid of the shadow of scriptural authority, than it is repugnant to the most obvious principles of reason, equity, and justice.

In 1745 appeared the “Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans,”* to which is prefixed,

* Among Dr. Taylor’s manuscripts, is a paraphrase and *practical* commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians.

“A Key to the Apostolic Writings.” In this admirable work, the author lays down a principle and mode of interpretation which is better adapted than any other to the right understanding of these (to us) confessedly difficult and obscure compositions. In its main outlines, it seems to have been suggested by Mr. Locke; and is detailed at some length in his note on Romans v. 6—8. In the first place, it is important always to remember that the apostolic writings are chiefly letters, suggested—most of them evidently, and the others in all probability—by the circumstances, and referring to the peculiar wants, conditions, and characters of their correspondents. We are therefore to infer, that, although they doubtless contain indirectly and incidentally an illustration of many important general principles of universal and permanent application, and therefore will deserve and are likely to reward the diligent study of Christians in all ages, yet they must be considered as having a more immediate reference to the circumstances of the churches to whom they were addressed, and of the Christian world in general of those times. Now these differed in many most important particulars from any thing which has since existed; and a want of attention to this difference, and a determination to seek in the condition of individual Christians at this remote period for something appropriate to what was addressed, not merely to the primitive disciples, but to the whole church, or to the sections into which the church was at that time divided of Jews and Gentiles taken collectively, has led to by far the greater part of the errors and misconceptions which have arisen in the study of the Epistles.

It is necessary also to bear in mind continually that the writers were Jews, and that they were addressing themselves, for the most part, to communities made up partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles, who, by the profession of their new faith as Christians, were necessarily thrown into close connexion and frequent intercourse with their Jewish brethren. It was to be expected, therefore, that the language adopted by writers so circumstanced would be founded upon that with which their own minds were already familiar in the Hebrew scriptures. The previous habits of thought and expression in Jewish writers could not fail to lead them to convey their views of the salvation which is by Christ in language borrowed from their own laws, customs, and even prejudices. Such language was likely to be familiar and easily intelligible to the persons whom they addressed, but is apt to be misunderstood by modern readers, to whom the subjects and practices alluded to are but imperfectly known, and who, moreover, are accustomed to read under the impression that they are to seek in their own condition, and in the circumstances of these times, for the objects to which all these obscure reasonings and illustrations—originally clear enough, but by which *they* are only confounded and perplexed—were intended to be applied.

It follows, therefore, that the difficulties we encounter in the study of St. Paul's writings (except such as arise from the character of his own very remarkable and peculiar style) will most commonly find their solution in an examination of the sense in which similar modes of expression are used in the Old Testament, considered with

reference to the condition and circumstances of the churches in those times. Accordingly, we find that many of the terms applied to the members of the primitive Christian church in the New Testament are derived from the language employed under the Old Covenant in speaking of the children of Israel; and there is, in fact, a sufficiently obvious and striking analogy in many particulars to favour this transference. The Israelites were selected from the idolatrous nations by the gratuitous favour of God, without regard to any previous merit on their part, to become his peculiar people, the subjects of a special covenant; hence they are said to be *chosen* or *elected*. The first consequence of this election was their deliverance from the state of bondage in which they were held in Egypt; hence they are said to be *delivered*, *saved*, *bought* or *purchased*, *redeemed*. Having been brought out of this abject state into a new and happy condition, God is said to *create*, *make* or *form* them anew; to have given them life, to have begotten them. Hence they are his children, to whom he sustains, in a peculiar sense, the character of a Father. He is their king, and they are his people; he is their shepherd, and they are his flock or sheep. Being set apart for his service, they are said to be holy, saints, washed; they are a people near to him, his congregation, his church, his inheritance. In this capacity he receives them into a covenant with himself, requiring from them homage, love, obedience, exclusive worship: on which conditions he promises protection and continued possession of all the privileges and blessings they enjoyed.

But all this language applied, not so much to the moral conduct and personal character of the Israelites taken individually, as to their external state as a community taken collectively; separated from the rest of the world by a peculiar ritual; consecrated to the service of God, for the purpose of maintaining a standing memorial and testimony against idolatry. Now in all these respects there was a remarkable analogy in the condition and circumstances of the primitive Christian church. They were a little flock, which had been separated from their unbelieving neighbours, both among Jews and Gentiles, to be the subjects of a new and better covenant; and that without any previous merit on their part entitling them thereto, but through the special favour of God. Hence they, too, were *called, elected*; they were a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; *called to be saints, saved, redeemed, purchased, &c.* All these terms, and a multitude of others, which frequently occur in the apostolic writings, will be found, on comparison, to have been derived from the language employed by the writers of the Old Testament in speaking of God's ancient people; and it was natural that the apostles, being themselves Jews, should be led by the analogous circumstances of the old and the new covenant, and by their previous familiar acquaintance with the style of their own sacred writings, to adopt similar expressions. Another consideration which still further favoured this transference of forms of expression, was the *actual* transference of the covenanted relation to God, from the Jews *as such*, to the church gathered unto Christ from among all nations. The

Jews are no longer the peculiar people : as Jews, they are cast out and rejected ; as far as relates to covenanted privileges, they are henceforth on a level with the rest of mankind.

The Christian church, therefore, having succeeded, in a great measure, to the same relative position, is naturally spoken of in the same terms. Christ has *redeemed* us unto himself as a *peculiar people* zealous of good works. Believers in Christ are acknowledged as the people of God, the spiritual Israel: having been enemies, they are reconciled, new created, new born. And these titles are applied to them as they were to the Jews, not in their individual capacity, but collectively; they consequently express, not moral character or inward disposition, but an external state;—certain advantages and privileges procured for them through the intervention of Christ, and especially by his death and resurrection—a knowledge of the will and intentions of God concerning them, and of their own duties and expectations both here and hereafter. They are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of works, so that no man can boast: it is the gift of God. But saved from what?—from the consequences of sin in a future state? No; the salvation here spoken of is something already accomplished. “By grace *are ye saved.*” They were saved from gross darkness and idolatry; saved from the bondage of the ceremonial law; saved from the evils of uncertainty as to their future expectations. This first justification or acceptance was a privilege already put into their hands, by the right use of which they were to work out their final salvation. These benefits are the gift of God through Jesus

Christ our Lord;—they are obtained by the redemption through his blood. This was the sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour which he offered to God for us. It was his righteousness, or kind and benevolent actions, his obedient death, or the sacrifice of his love and obedience, which made atonement or reconciliation for the sins of the world; not by satisfying law or justice, of which the Scripture says nothing, but calls it a *free gift*. It is about this *first*, and not the *final* justification, that the apostle argues in the Epistle to the Romans; it is of grace, without works; while the other is wrought out as its consequence or result by patient continuance in well-doing.

The above is a brief and imperfect outline of the principles laid down and illustrated with great ability and learning in this remarkable treatise; which, perhaps, did more than any other to place the interpretation of these important but difficult and obscure parts of Scripture on its right ground. It is introduced by a very interesting dedication “to the Society of Christians in the city of Norwich, whom I serve in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;” some passages of which well deserve insertion, as giving a highly favourable impression of both parties, and placing in a just and striking light what is, or ought to be, the relation between minister and people:

“It is my honour and pleasure, as well as duty, to serve you in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and your kind acceptance, and due improvement of my honest and well-intended labours, is the greatest encouragement I desire. Your affections and friendly regards are, in effect, the whole world to me; and it is my ambition

to purchase them only by such worthy actions and honourable discharge of duty as deserve a just and solid esteem. * * *

“It is your honour and happiness that you have always been a peaceable people. You scorn to practise the unchristian methods of some who, to support a favourite sentiment, foment heats, animosities, and divisions, and discourage men of probity and learning. You allow your ministers to read the Bible, and to speak what they find there. You possess universal charity and good-will to all your brethren in Christ, and to all mankind. These are noble principles, and I hope you will never relinquish them. Give your Catholicism its proper worth, by improving in sound knowledge, and guard it with resolution. Reject all slavish narrow principles with disdain. Neither list yourselves, nor be pressed into the service of any sect or party whatsoever. Be only Christians, and follow only God and truth.

“You know your congregation stands upon no other ground but that catholic one, which the apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans, asserts and demonstrates to be the only and sufficient foundation of a right to a place in the church and kingdom of God,—faith in Jesus Christ. You may rest fully satisfied that you are a true church, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. And you have, therefore, the best reason in the world for adhering steadily to the cause you have espoused, the cause of Christian liberty; which at once settles your profession upon an infallible bottom, rejects all human impositions, and

at the same time comprehends and cordially receives all who are of the faith of the Son of God."

This and the former treatise on Original Sin produced a very extensive, powerful, and permanent effect. "By shaking the main outworks of Calvinism, he effected a breach by which a host of the friends of truth have since entered." The adherents to the old opinion did not, however, suffer his attempt at subverting them to pass unnoticed. Much narrowness still prevailed, and malice and rancour too often supplied the want of argument. A pamphlet published by a fellow-citizen perhaps exceeded any thing ever published in virulence and abuse; and a publication by a well-known polemic of the day, John Macgowan, entitled "The Arian's and Socinian's Monitor," (a book which still retains its place and popularity with those who delight in such modes of dealing with sacred subjects,) describes the author as tossing upon the burning billows of hell, and vainly supplicating mercy and forgiveness from the God whom he had blasphemed. Some later editions of this work have been even adorned with a frontispiece faithfully representing to the eye the above description.

As a set-off against such denunciations as these, we may be well contented to refer to the commendatory notice of Bishop Watson, who inserted the "Key to the Apostolic Writings" in his valuable collection of Theological Tracts; characterizing it as the best introduction to the Epistles, and the clearest account of the whole Gospel scheme, that ever was written. Dr. Bentham, Divinity Professor at Oxford, and Dr. Paley, have

also strongly recommended it to the careful study of candidates for the ministry in the Established Church. As for the worthy author himself, though by no means indifferent to the favourable opinion of the wise and good, we cannot doubt that he would receive the idle ravings of a Macgowan with contempt, or rather with mild compassion; thinking it enough to reply in the language of the apostle, "with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

In 1750 Mr. Taylor published a "Collection of Tunes in various Airs," for the use of his Congregation. This was one of the first collections of the kind, and a plain and simple introduction to the art of singing was prefixed to it. This was an accomplishment in which the author delighted and excelled; an accomplishment, we may add, which seems to have been inherited in no ordinary degree by not a few of his descendants. The pleasure, we are told, which the author took in instructing the younger part of his congregation in psalmody, induced him to draw up for their assistance the above useful little publication; and, in order to perfect his choir in so delightful a part of their devotional duty, he constantly devoted one evening in the week to their instruction. We have before noticed his "Scripture Catechism," out of which he regularly examined his young auditors, and impressed upon their minds the importance of attention to the sacred duties of religion.*

* See in various points of his history a Sketch of the Life of the late Dr. J. Taylor, of Norwich, from the Universal Theological Magazine for July 1804, afterwards enlarged and printed in a distinct form by Messrs. R. and A. Taylor.

In 1751 appeared a very learned and valuable treatise, entitled, "The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement examined, first in relation to the Jewish Sacrifices, and then to the Sacrifice of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In this work the author first inquires into the original meaning, design, and efficacy of sacrifices, which he shews to be, in all respects, the same as that of prayer and praise, or any other suitable expression of our religious regards which are pleasing to God, as they proceed from or produce good affections in us. He then examines the prevailing notion that in sin-offerings the guilt of the offender was supposed to be transferred to the victim; and that the sacrifice became in this manner a *type* of the sacrifice of Christ, who, therefore, died to satisfy divine justice, by suffering the punishment due to the sins of men. After a complete, and what may well be called an *exhaustive*, critical inquiry into the meaning of the different terms employed in the Old Testament in speaking of this subject, he concludes that "sacrifices were symbolical addresses to God, expressing by outward signs what is expressed in prayer and praise by words, or in the course of life by deeds;—that they made atonement for sin, not as being substituted in the stead of the sacrificer, and bearing his sin or punishment, nor as an equivalent to divine justice—for neither of these enter into the notion of atonement—but as the sacrificer covenanted or transacted with God upon the sincerity of his soul, and with his sacrifice presented a penitent or thankful heart, and afterwards led an obedient life." P. 70.

He then enters upon a similar investigation of

the effects ascribed in Scripture to our Lord's "atonement;" and expresses the result in the following terms:—"I conclude, therefore, that the sacrifice of Christ was truly and properly, in the highest degree, and far beyond any other, *piacular* and *expiatory*, to make atonement for, or to take away sin. Not only to give us an example; not only to assure us of remission, or to procure our Lord a commission to publish the forgiveness of sin, but, moreover, to obtain that forgiveness, by doing what God in his wisdom and goodness judged fit and expedient to be done in order to the forgiveness of sin, and without which he did not think it fit or expedient to grant the forgiveness of sin." P. 91. At the same time he denies that this efficacy consisted in any satisfaction to vindictive justice by suffering a vicarious punishment. The blood of Christ is precious in the sight of God, inasmuch as his obedience unto death was the crowning act of a life of pure and perfect holiness; so that, for the sake of it, the Father was pleased to grant, through him, the forgiveness of sins, and a new dispensation of grace; in the same manner and in the same sense as the obedience of Abraham was a reason for bestowing blessings upon his posterity; and as Moses and other good men averted the judgments of God by their prayers and righteousness. P. 102.

Even by those least disposed to favour the notion of a vicarious sacrifice, it may be thought not unreasonable to suppose that the death of Christ, together with all the other actions of his pure and holy life, might be in themselves the motives or reasons why God thought fit to bestow many blessings and favours upon mankind. There are

even several instances which seem to shew that the supposition is analogous with the dealings of our heavenly Father towards his creatures in other cases. It seems, indeed, to be generally observable that various benefits and blessings are conferred upon large portions of mankind, or at least upon their families and connexions, in consequence, or for the sake of, the obedience or righteousness of individuals. It has been truly said that "the house of the righteous shall stand;" the descendants and connexions of those who have been eminent for good and excellent qualities are often themselves perceptibly the objects of Divine favour. If then, in conformity with this principle, the Israelites were selected to be God's chosen people for the sake of Abraham—spared from the effects of his just displeasure for the sake of Moses;—if, universally, it would seem that the obedience and piety of the father are the means of drawing down the divine blessing upon the children, we may fairly enough conclude that important benefits are communicated, new discoveries of divine knowledge, new dispensations of divine grace, are granted to the faithful disciples of Christ, for *the sake*, in reward, of his obedience unto death. It may be in this mode that God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, and a kingdom which is above every kingdom; and it is not impossible that this may be all that is really meant by many theologians when they speak of the *meritorious* sacrifice of our Redeemer as the means of purchasing for mankind Gospel blessings and privileges. That Dr. Taylor did not mean to go further than this, is, we apprehend, sufficiently mani-

fest from the general strain of his writings, and even from other parts of this treatise; though, in expressing his opinion, as in the above extracts, he may be thought to have occasionally employed language which is liable to be misunderstood.*

In 1754 appeared the first volume, in folio, of our author's great work, which establishes his claim to a place in the first rank of biblical scholars, his "HEBREW CONCORDANCE." This work, the labour of fourteen years, will be a durable monument of his learning and unwearied industry, as well as of his zeal to promote the study of the Scriptures. In the advertisement announcing it as ready for the press, he appeals, as a practical example of the use to be made of such a work, to the advantage he had himself derived from it in his late treatise on the "Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement;" in which he had been enabled, by means of it, to collect and arrange under proper heads all the various places where each Hebrew word of importance relating to the subject in question occurs. An advantage which could have been obtained only by the use of a concordance of the original language, because it is evident that, in every translation, even the most literal, the same original word is, and must be, often represented by different words, and the same word in the translation employed as the representative of different words in the original.

This work was published by subscription, and was extensively patronized by persons of all

* See some admirable remarks on this Treatise, and on the subject in general, in a letter addressed to the author by Dr. Duchal, and inserted in the second volume of the Theological Repository.

classes and religious parties. In particular we find, in the list of subscribers, the names of twenty-two members of the English and fifteen of the Irish Episcopal bench; a testimony to the author's high and deserved reputation as a scholar, which will be thought more creditable to both parties when we consider that his name, however distinguished, had been for many years chiefly known to the public from its connexion with obnoxious and unpopular theological tenets. He appears, indeed, to have been in communication with many of the most distinguished churchmen of his time, both for dignity and learning. With Dr. Hayter, then Bishop of Norwich, he constantly maintained a friendly correspondence and personal intercourse. He corresponded, too, with Michaelis and Kennicott, and particularly with Dr. Law, afterwards Bishop of Carlisle.

In the interval between the publication of the first and second volumes, he received from the University of Glasgow the degree of D.D.; a literary honour to which few men were better entitled than he, though his great modesty made him surprised at receiving it without solicitation. The terms of the diploma were equally honourable to the body who conferred and to the individual who received it. They eulogize "*tum morum sanctimoniam, tum ingenium vere liberum, et in nullius sectæ verba jurare addictum.*" There can be little doubt that this appropriate direction of the honour conferred is to be attributed to the discerning friendship of the truly excellent, liberal, and pious Dr. Leechman, with whom Dr. Taylor had long maintained a confidential correspondence.

The perfection of this great labour of his life

Dr. Taylor always afterwards kept in view, making his additions and corrections in a copy which remains among his MSS. The study of the Hebrew language has certainly not increased in this country since the period of this publication; or the student, it might be thought, would long ere this have had placed within his reach, in a convenient and perhaps condensed form, a work so eminently calculated to facilitate his labours, and to make the Hebrew Scriptures their own interpreter.

About this period of his career Dr. Taylor's congregation determined on the erection of a new, more spacious, and commodious place of worship; on the opening of which he preached and published a sermon on Haggai ii. 8, 9, entitled, "The Glory of any House erected for Public Worship, and the true Principles, civil and social, of Protestant Dissenters." In this discourse he describes, in forcible and eloquent terms, the character of the peace which will be established in a house frequented by true worshipers;—"Peace with God,—peace and comfort in our own breasts,—peace and good-will towards mankind,—peace in the quiet enjoyment of national and religious rights,—peace, harmony, and love among ourselves." He particularly dwells on the liberal views which influenced them, as a Christian society, in their relation to other religious denominations. "We are Christians," says he, "and only Christians; a name which, in its original and true meaning, includes all that is virtuous and amiable, just and good, noble and divine, excellent and heavenly. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Calvinists, Armi-

nians, Arians, Trinitarians, and others, are names of religious distinctions. But, however we may commonly be ranked under any of these divisions, we reject them all. We disown all connexion, except that of love and good-will, with any sect or party whatsoever; and we consider all our fellow Protestants, of every denomination, in the same light, only as Christians, and cordially embrace them all in affection and charity as such. Whatever peculiar tenets they may hold, or in what respects soever they may differ from us, such tenets and such difference we consider not as affecting their Christian character and profession in general. Notwithstanding such peculiarities, we allow they may be good Christians, and as good Christians as ourselves.

“As we judge all men to be fallible, so we pass the very same judgment upon ourselves. As we allow no man to have dominion over our own faith, so we pretend to have no dominion over any man’s faith or conscience, but freely leave him to the faithful exercise of his own judgment;—nay, we advise and entreat every person to the free and sincere use of his own understanding and judgment, as the only way in which he can approve himself to God, and gain the acceptance of his religious endeavours. And, in this way, though he may not agree with us in disputable points, we own and receive him as acceptable to God, and entitled to our religious fellowship.

“This chapel, therefore, we have erected; and here we intend to worship the living and true God through the one Mediator Jesus Christ, not in opposition to, but in perfect peace and harmony

with, all our fellow Protestants. This edifice is founded upon no party principles or tenets, but is built on purpose, and with this very design, to keep ourselves clear from them all; to discharge ourselves from all prejudices and fetters in which any of them may be held; that so we may exercise the public duties of religion upon the most catholic and charitable foundation, according to the rules and spirit of genuine Christianity, as taught and established by our Lord and his inspired Apostles; and that, upon this enlarged ground, we may be quite free to search the Scriptures, to discover, correct, and reform, at any time, our own mistakes and deficiencies; and at liberty to exercise communion with any of our Christian brethren.

“This is our present sense and spirit, and I hope it will always be so. May all party zeal, strife, and animosity, be banished from all our hearts, and here and every where be totally extinguished! May all wrangling, contention, doubtful disputation, and angry debate, which have so long and so wretchedly distracted the Christian church, entirely cease and sink into eternal silence! May we follow the truth in love, in simplicity, and sincerity! In this place may the doctrines of salvation, as delivered in the Holy Scriptures, be explained upon their proper evidence; with this single and only view, to shew their truth, excellency, and power—not to disparage, offend, or disturb others, but for our own benefit and comfort, that we may lay them up in our own hearts, and practise them in our own lives. Thus we shall act as becomes good Christians, the sons of peace; the Gospel of peace will shine brightly

among us; the peace of God, which passeth understanding, will rule in our breasts, and the God of peace will make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

About this time appeared, "The Lord's Supper explained on Scripture Principles;" a valuable tract, in which the intention and permanent obligation of this ordinance are ably stated, placed on a just and rational basis, cleared of superstitious prejudices and unauthorized human additions, and enforced with much impressive and eloquent illustration. In 1757 was published, "Infant Baptism a Symbol of the Covenant of Grace."

Of Dr. Taylor's pulpit compositions but few have been published, though many remain in MS. They are written in a plain and simple style, but his manner as a preacher is described as impressive and dignified. He was certainly for many years the highly popular and acceptable minister of a numerous and intelligent congregation; and there is reason to believe that his public services and pastoral instructions, aided by the personal weight and influence which he, doubtless, derived from his reputation as a consummate scholar and theologian, were mainly instrumental in diffusing among them the liberality of views and character by which they have always been distinguished.

Dr. Taylor had lived on terms of the most perfect cordiality with his congregation. They regarded him with the highest respect and attachment, not only on account of his literary eminence and reputation, but his agreeable deportment in society, free from pedantry, and marked in every

relation of life by kindness and affability. He had also established there the most eligible family connexion,* and was now arrived at an age when men in general become increasingly averse to the trouble and uncertainty of a change. Nevertheless, he was induced by earnest persuasion to dissolve this happy connexion, in order to commence, at this late period of his life, the laborious and anxious office of theological tutor in the newly-formed academy at Warrington, in Lancashire, whose prospects of success were represented as depending on his co-operation. Thither he removed in October 1757. Of the sacrifice of personal ease and comfort which this change, to a man circumstanced as he was, could not but be expected to involve, he thus speaks, in a passage of his Scripture Account of Prayer:—"I am returned to this my native county, not with any selfish or sinister views, but with a sincere and disinterested desire to do you service in the Gospel of Christ, by communicating to young students that knowledge which I have acquired by a long course of thought and the most impartial inquiry. It has been a great advantage to my usefulness, which I reflect upon with thankfulness and pleasure, that in every other situation I have lived in peace, honour, and esteem, with persons of the best sense and fortune, especially in my last situation, which I could not but leave with reluctance, and from which nothing could have drawn me but a sense of my duty to God."

* His only surviving son had married the grand-daughter of John Meadows, one of the ejected ministers, and of Sarah Fairfax, his wife, on whose side were no less than three of those confessors.

The society at Norwich, with great generosity and public spirit, not only concurred in this mutual sacrifice, but many of them very liberally contributed to the funds of the institution.

Of the manner in which Dr. Taylor executed his new office, a particular account is given in the historical notices of the Warrington academy, inserted in the *Monthly Repository*, vol. viii., from which we may be allowed to insert the following extracts:—"From the high character which he justly bore as a consummate Hebrew scholar, it may be presumed that he would be very careful thoroughly to ground his pupils in the knowledge of this sacred tongue. This appears accordingly to have been the case. From the papers with which the present writer has been favoured by the Rev. Thomas Astley, of Chesterfield, his only surviving pupil in these branches of learning, it is evident that, in addition to the ordinary mode of grammatical instruction, he drew out for them, and caused them to copy and get by heart, a sort of sacred vocabulary, containing copious and elaborate lists of the various Hebrew denominations of persons, things, relations, qualities, &c.; distinguishing the various synonyms, with their different shades of meaning, and often supplying the correspondent Greek terms in the Septuagint and New Testament.

He afterwards gave them a course of lectures on the idiomatic phraseology of the Hebrew Scriptures, at the same time pointing out the influence which these idioms frequently have upon the Greek of the New Testament, and the necessity of being acquainted with and constantly attending to them, in order to attain a just idea

of the exact sense of many passages in the New Testament writers. The rules and observations contained in those lectures were illustrated by a vast number of quotations from both parts of the sacred volume, as well as by many from Greek and Latin classics. They professed to be chiefly an abridgment, or rather a reduction to order, of the substance of Glassius's *Philologia Sacra*, but were enriched with many additions from other sources as well as from the Doctor's own stores. When he had thus thoroughly grounded his pupils in the languages of both Testaments, and, probably, read with them a considerable portion of each, he led them through a regular course of theological lectures; for which purpose he drew up, as a text book, his scheme of scripture divinity, which was printed for the use of the students at the expense of the trustees of the academy, and, after his death, was published to the world at large by his son, Mr. Richard Taylor, of Norwich. It has since been admitted by Bp. Watson into his collection of Theological Tracts; and it is certainly a very learned and valuable work, though by no means so perfect as its author, had he lived, would probably have made it.

The general idea is certainly excellent of studying the divine dispensations historically. The introduction contains a series of observations, on the whole very judicious, on Christian theology; on the rules to be observed in interpreting the Scriptures; and on the dispositions which it is necessary that the student should bring with him to their successful investigation. Then follow some remarks on the divine dispensations; in which, among much good, there is, it must be

confessed, some share of fancy with regard to several particulars. The author then proceeds to a particular view of the creation, the institution of the sabbath, the paradisiacal state of trial, the fall and its consequences, (interweaving here his Treatise on Original Sin,) the origin of sacrifices, the shechinah, the deluge, the dispersion from Babel, the patriarchal religion exemplified in the book of Job, its corruption, the call of Abraham, and the covenant of grace with him, (referring to his pamphlet so called,) its commencement in the separation of the people of Israel, with the methods of the Divine wisdom in this important dispensation, (more fully enlarged on in his Key to the Apostolic Writings,) the civil government and ritual of the Hebrews, (Lowman referred to,) its rational and spiritual meaning (the sacrificial part of it more fully explained in his Scripture Doctrine of Atonement). He then gives a general review of the authors, and what they teach, from the Exodus to the building of the Temple, from thence to its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar; the moral causes of the captivity, and the purposes answered by it; the authors in both these periods, particularly the prophets, chronologically arranged. Then, after a view of the state of the world at the coming of Jesus Christ, he refers to his Treatise on the Lord's Supper for his thoughts on the excellent character of Christ, and on the Divine principles, doctrine, and spirit of the Gospel.

Thus far the work was printed by the Doctor himself, and employed by him as his text book in his lectures to the students. He always prefaced his lectures, we are informed by the Editor

of the enlarged posthumous edition with the following solemn charge :

“ I do solemnly charge you, in the name of the God of Truth, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and before whose judgment-seat you must in no long time appear, 1. That in all your studies and inquiries of a religious nature, present or future, you do constantly, carefully, impartially, and conscientiously attend to evidence as it lies in the holy scriptures, or in the nature of things and the dictates of reason; cautiously guarding against the sallies of imagination, and the fallacy of ill-grounded conjecture. 2. That you admit, embrace, or assent to no principle or sentiment by me taught or advanced, but only so far as it shall appear to you to be supported and justified by proper evidence from revelation or the reason of things. 3. That if at any time hereafter any principle or sentiment by me taught or advanced, or by you admitted and embraced, shall, upon impartial and faithful examination, appear to you to be dubious or false, you either suspect or totally reject such principle or sentiment. 4. That you keep your mind always open to evidence; that you labour to banish from your breast all prejudice, prepossession, and party zeal; that you study to live in peace and love with all your fellow Christians, and that you steadily assert for yourself, and freely allow to others, the unalienable rights of judgment and conscience.” “ It seems impossible,” the Editor observes, “ to adjust the terms between a tutor and his pupils more equitably.”

To the edition of the “ Scripture Divinity,”

published after the author's death, were appended some excellent chapters, containing remarks on the expediency of revelation, replies to various objections against it, observations on the original and authority, the harmony and agreement, the internal worth and excellence, of the scriptures, and the thankful esteem with which Christians ought to receive and practically improve them.

During his residence at Warrington, Dr. Taylor published an "Examination of the Scheme of Morality advanced by Dr. Hutcheson, late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow;" and a "Sketch of Moral Philosophy," for the use of his class. In the first of these pamphlets, the author endeavours to refute Hutcheson's view of our perceptions of moral distinctions as founded on a supposed moral sense or instinctive principle; a notion to which he was strongly opposed. His own opinions on the disputable questions in moral science seem to have most nearly resembled those maintained by Dr. Clarke, and, more recently, by Dr. Price in his Review of the principal Questions in Morals. This tract was received with less favour by various members of his own denomination than a production of Dr. Taylor's might seem entitled to expect; a circumstance to be ascribed, in a great measure, to its appearance being accidentally connected with some unfortunate jealousies and disputes which arose between him and some of the most active friends of the Academy. For it cannot be concealed, that Dr. Taylor's last years were embittered by much disappointment and vexation, arising from what he conceived to be unauthorized interference with the conduct of his depart-

ment in the institution. On this painful subject it would be to little purpose to say more at present; especially considering that, at this distance of time, it is impossible to procure a complete knowledge of all the circumstances of the case.

Dr. Taylor wrote at Warrington, a pamphlet entitled "The Scripture Account of Prayer, in an Address to the Dissenters of Lancashire," occasioned by the preparation of a Liturgy, to be introduced into a new place of worship recently established at Liverpool; a proceeding which had excited considerable interest, and some rather angry controversy. On this question Dr. Taylor took a decided part, and expressed his opinion in strong terms, having a great dislike both to a liturgy in general, and more especially to the idea of introducing it in place of the method of free prayer, commonly practised among Protestant Dissenters.

It is not necessary here to enter into the argument on either of these points; but it may be observed, that the dispute seems to have arisen in part from a misconception of the object which the promoters of the scheme had in view, which was not strictly to introduce a form of prayer into congregations of Dissenters properly so called, but to afford to many members of the Established Church, who had expressed a dislike to the doctrine of the Common Prayer on the one hand, and to the extemporaneous prayer in use among Dissenters on the other, an opportunity of joining in a form of worship to which neither of their objections should apply. With this view a chapel was opened at Liverpool, in which the liturgy in question was introduced; but as very few of the

parties for whose accommodation it was set on foot chose, after all, to avail themselves of it, the experiment, after a few years, was abandoned. It is believed that none of the ministers who were concerned in the preparation of this form of prayer ever attempted or wished to introduce it into their own places.

The devotional spirit of this tract is of that deep and ardent kind which is quite characteristic of the confessors of the preceding century; "excellent men," he says, "because excellent, instant, and fervent in prayer;" whose eminent zeal and sacrifices in the cause of religious truth he eulogizes in such terms of glowing and affectionate reverence as drew commendation from many of those whose prejudices had accustomed them to consider him in any other character than that which, in reality, eminently belonged to him.

The "Scripture Account of Prayer" was prepared for the press by Dr. Taylor in the spring of 1761, (his prefatory remarks being dated 25th February,) but was not published by him. Early in the morning of the 5th of March in that year, while asleep in his bed, it pleased God to remove him to a better world. From the composed posture in which the body was found, it was judged that his departure had been perfectly tranquil. On the second of June, in the same year, his wife followed him, after having acquitted herself as a true Christian under a long course of bodily weakness. They were both interred in the chapel yard at Chowbent, near Bolton, in Lancashire. A plain mural tablet is fixed in the chapel, with the following inscription:—

Near to this place
rests what was mortal of
JOHN TAYLOR, D.D.
Reader,
expect no eulogium from
this stone ;
enquire among the friends
of Learning, Liberty, and Truth.
These will do him Justice.

While taking his natural rest, he fell asleep
in Jesus Christ, the 5th of March, 1761, aged 66.

A tablet has more recently been erected to his memory in the chapel at Norwich, graced with a classic inscription from the gifted pen of Dr. Parr, who was an ardent admirer of his talents and virtues.

Dr. Taylor left one surviving son, Mr. Richard Taylor, of Norwich, and a daughter, married to Mr. John Rigby, of Chowbent. From those two stocks have proceeded very widely extending branches. Before his death he had seen grandchildren* growing up around him, several of whom have been till very lately, and some of whom are still, in our churches, universally respected and esteemed.

Dr. Taylor's eldest grandson, the Rev. Philip Taylor, late of Dublin, was born at Norwich, in 1747. He received his education first under Dr. Harwood, then of Congleton, afterwards in the academies of Exeter and Warrington. In 1767, he was chosen assistant to the Rev. John Brekell, of Benn's Garden, in Liverpool, whom he succeeded as minister of the congregation in 1770. In 1777 he removed to Dublin, as assistant to his father-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Weld, in the pastoral charge of the congregation assem-

* On the birth of the first was written his tract, "The value of a Child," republished in 1816, by Messrs. R. and A. Taylor.

bling in Eustace Street, in that city. In this connexion he continued during the remainder of a life protracted to the advanced period of eighty-three years, universally and deservedly respected.

Of another grandson, the late excellent Mr. John Taylor, of Norwich, an interesting and detailed memoir from the pen of his son, Mr. Edward Taylor, will be found in the Monthly Repository for 1826. A third, Mr. Meadows Taylor, late of Diss, in Norfolk, is commemorated in the Christian Reformer for 1838. It is needless to advert more particularly to many others who still worthily maintain the character of the name they have inherited, and will, doubtless, one day receive from survivors the meed of grateful praise for eminent talents and valuable services.

“Late be the hour, and distant be the day!”

Dr. Taylor's zealously attached friend, the learned Dr. Edward Harwood—himself eminently qualified by his attainments to estimate rightly the extent and value of those which he saw displayed in others—preached and published a sermon on the occasion of his death, which is more than usually particular in reference to the character and biography of its subject.

This sermon was written under the influence of feelings strongly excited by the unhappy disputes before adverted to, which renders it probable that the representations it contains of the conduct of some parties connected with the institution are, at least, considerably exaggerated. We have already expressed our unwillingness to enter further into this subject; but, as failings in temper and spirit have, in consequence, been imputed to Dr. Taylor, which were wholly alien to his true

character, it may not be amiss to subjoin a few extracts, as recording the testimony of an observer so well qualified for the task of delineating the excellence of his friend :

“ My most worthy and excellent friend, Dr. Taylor, [was] a man to whose writings and personal instructions I owe more than to all the books and men I ever conversed with. I shall ever look upon it as the most happy providence with which I was ever favoured, that, in early life, I read his most excellent books, full of the best instruction, and most excellently calculated to enlarge the mind, and to inspire it with just, rational, and generous sentiments. And I shall ever esteem it as a most distinguishing blessing, that I was afterward honoured with his friendship, and an epistolary correspondence for some years before his death, in which, with the greatest benevolence and goodness of heart, he condescended to solve the difficulties I proposed, and answer my objections.

“ His writings will remain an immortal monument of his various learning, excellent abilities, just and clear discernment, and critical knowledge of the Scriptures. His mind was the most excellently furnished with valuable and useful branches of literature of any man’s I ever knew. His reading in modern books, indeed, was far from being extensive. It cannot be supposed, that a person whose whole life was indefatigably employed, besides the constant duties of the ministry, in teaching a grammar school, and in forming an Hebrew Concordance, should be able to redeem many vacant hours for acquiring a large acquaintance with what was daily passing in the literary world. Instead of wondering that he

knew no more of books, we ought rather to wonder that he had read so much as he really had, considering the few avocations he permitted himself to enjoy. But a defect here was amply compensated by an habit of close thinking, and an accurate attention to the powers of his own mind.

“In classical learning lay his great excellence. He had in early life committed to memory, and faithfully retained, almost all the beautiful passages and striking descriptions in the Greek and Roman poets, and could repeat them with an exactness and propriety that was amazing.

“To the temper, disposition, abilities, learning, and great merit of Dr. Taylor, I cannot be supposed to be a stranger, having been happy in a strict intimacy with him for several years. With regard to these, I only pretend faithfully to speak from my own observation of what I saw in him, and therefore shall impartially transcribe the strong idea of his goodness and virtue which is warmly impressed on my heart.

“I never saw a man’s countenance that was a truer index of his mind than Dr. Taylor’s. There was something placid and engaging in his air and features, that most powerfully commanded respect and love. An argument, when dictated by his strong sense, and urged by that power of language he possessed, was irresistible, when it was enforced by a sweet and insinuating look, to which you could deny nothing. Nothing could be further from that haughty and supercilious air, and mien, and gait, which other great men insensibly contract, and by which they are publicly known and distinguished from the rest of the species. He was never known to brow-beat modest virtue, but to encourage it by every

honest art. It delighted his soul to find in any a docile and ingenuous disposition, desirous of knowledge, particularly scriptural knowledge, and he cultivated such a disposition with more than parental care and fondness.

“When I say he was no bigot, I am sensible I shall be accused of great partiality by some, and of great heresy by others. But if I knew any thing of good Dr. Taylor, this I can with truth affirm concerning him, that he loved good persons of all parties and denominations, however widely they might differ from him; would frequently repeat it again and again, ‘that Christians of all parties are agreed in the great fundamentals of religion, and only differ about some few trifling distinctions; that to embrace the same set of notions as he or any other fallible man did, was not at all material with regard to men’s final happiness and salvation.’ If ever he expressed an uncommon warmth and honest indignation against any thing, it was against Athanasianism, which he thought one of the greatest corruptions of pure and genuine Christianity, as this doctrine entirely subverts the unity of God, the great and primary foundation of all religion, natural and revealed.”

When engaged in preparing the notice of Dr. Taylor’s descendants, in page 342, the author little thought that, even before it had passed through the press, he should be called on to record the loss of one of them, to whom the expressions there used were most peculiarly applicable, and to whose able and zealous exertions the interests of liberty, virtue, and religion were deeply indebted.—*Edgar Taylor*, the son of Samuel Taylor, Esq., of New Buckenham, in the county of Norfolk, and great grandson to the subject of this memoir, was born in 1793.

He settled in London as a solicitor, and quickly at-

tained to great eminence in that department of the legal profession; so that for a series of years he was the person on whom the Dissenters, particularly the Unitarian Dissenters, were accustomed chiefly to rely, whenever it was necessary to resort to legal measures for the maintenance or extension of their civil rights. As one of the Presbyterian Deputies, he was among the most efficient promoters of the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts; he took an active part in procuring the late Marriage and Registration Acts; and was named in the last Act as one of the unsalaried commissioners for carrying it into effect. Few men in his branch of the profession were more frequently consulted in the course of the numerous reforms of the law which have been from time to time effected, or too often only proposed. The mildness of his manners was well combined with inflexible consistency, and rendered him the fit organ of measures of conciliation and amicable compromise.

Of his literary acquirements he has left proofs in several works connected with history and antiquities, and with his own profession. His learning and piety led him to devote much attention to scriptural criticism. He superintended the London edition of Griesbach's New Testament in Greek, which was published in 1818; the first sheets of another edition of the same work, now in the press, passed through his hands; and he has left manuscripts which shew that his closing days were given to the serious study of the Sacred volume: these, it is hoped, will be laid before the public.

A painful and incurable disease, with which he was afflicted for the last twelve years of his life, compelled him of late to withdraw from the active exercise of his profession, and at the comparatively early age of forty-six we have to deplore the loss of one most eminently qualified by abilities, attainments, and disposition to render important service to every good cause. Mr. Taylor's religious principles were founded on careful and earnest inquiry, and were happily effectual to support him under the severe trials of bodily suffering to which he was subjected. These he sustained with fortitude and resignation, and died full of that assurance which a Christian's hope alone can supply. The adding of a few notes and corrections to the MS. of this Memoir was, in all probability, nearly the latest exercise of his pen.

DISSENTING ACADEMIES.

ONE of the most remarkable features in the history both of theological and general literature in England is found in the great number of academical institutions which have been established in connexion with almost every denomination of Dissenters, for the supply of their churches with learned and qualified ministers, and also for the liberal education of the youth of their more opulent families. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which only *ought* to be, what they are called, *national* seats of education, have been placed under the exclusive guardianship of the established Church. Its clergy have at all times possessed the entire and uncontrolled direction of these seminaries; and their whole constitution, and the course of study pursued in them, has consequently been regulated with a reference to its interests. Dissent is not acknowledged or tolerated at either of them; and no youth can partake of the advantages professedly provided by the liberality of our ancestors for the benefit of the nation at large without at least an external and temporary conformity to the discipline and worship of the church. In *one*, a formal subscription to her articles of faith is exacted, on their first entrance, from boys, who cannot be supposed to have given even the most cursory and superficial attention to the variety of disputed points which

these articles involve; and in *both* this compliance is a necessary preliminary to all academical honours or distinctions.

In this respect the universities of England differ from those of every other country of Protestant Europe, which are open to persons of every class and religious profession, without distinction. The peculiarity is not one which we have any reason to be proud of; and, in fact, it has greatly tended to aggravate the bitter sectarian spirit in which it originated, and which interferes in this country, to such a lamentable extent, with the comfort of social intercourse, and with the just practical influence of religious principles and feelings among all parties. But one important consequence has been, that the Dissenters, finding themselves unjustly debarred from those opportunities of liberal education which were intended for all, and being, for the most part, unwilling to forego the services of a learned ministry, have made great exertions to supply the deficiency, as far as was practicable, in private institutions; and though these institutions have, doubtless, been of various and unequal merit, yet upon the whole, and when the disadvantages with which they have had to struggle in the unfair competition are taken into the account, there is no reason to think that in really valuable learning, or in any of the accomplishments which are desirable in a minister of religion, their *alumni* have been materially inferior to those of more favoured establishments. The unbiassed and unprejudiced historian of letters (if such a person should ever be found) will be ready to admit that a very fair proportion of the most distinguished scholars and divines of

whom our country can boast are the produce of dissenting academies. A comprehensive and impartial history of these institutions, independently of its value in other points of view, would possess a great general interest, from the light which it would throw on the state and progress in England, not only of *theology*, but of literature and intellectual cultivation in every department, during the period which has elapsed since the rise of the leading denominations of Protestant Dissenters.

This class of institutions originated at a very early period in the history of Nonconformity; even anterior to the Act of Toleration, when they were, of course, carried on under the pressure of difficulties and disadvantages much greater than they have now to encounter, and, in many cases, under circumstances of no slight personal danger. But the first race of Nonconformist Divines, who had been ejected from their benefices in the Church by the Act of Uniformity, sustained a high character for talent and learning; and they were earnestly desirous that their successors, though unjustly precluded from the opportunities which they had enjoyed, should, as far as possible, maintain the reputation of the dissenting body in these respects. In this connexion, the names of Frankland, Woodhouse, Warren, and many others, are deserving of honourable remembrance. But even after the period when they, at length, received the partial protection of the civil power, they were still exposed to annoyance and vexation, and harassing processes were occasionally commenced in the ecclesiastical courts against those who presided over theological seminaries. The last attempt of this kind occurred in 1732, in the

case of Dr. Doddridge, which was happily checked by the prompt and effectual personal interference of George II.

It were greatly to be wished, that the promoters of academical education among the Dissenters had been at all times solicitous to guard against the influence of that narrow-minded, exclusive spirit which first created the necessity for their exertions. But unhappily, in the great majority of cases, the same sectarian views have prevailed in them, on a smaller scale, which we observe with so much regret in our national establishments. The object, in almost all of them, seems to have been, not to diffuse sound learning, or to place in the hands of the pupils the torch by which they might explore the truth for themselves, in the exercise of free, enlightened, and, as far as possible, unbiassed inquiry, but to train up partizans of a particular sect; and they have generally adopted the same unfair means of securing this object which, when put into operation against themselves, had occasioned their own exclusion from Oxford and Cambridge; demanding both from tutors and students a declaration of their adherence to a certain system of doctrines, or subscription to a certain specified formula of human composition. In some instances they have even gone beyond the universities in the rigour of their restrictions. Thus Dr. Priestley tells us, that at the academy at Mile End, to which his friends were, at first, desirous to send him, every student was not only required to subscribe his assent to ten printed articles of the strictest Calvinism, but to repeat his subscription every six months.

We may fairly claim it as a distinction (an

honourable distinction we deem it) on the part of Unitarian Dissenters, that *their* academies, at the same time that they have commonly aimed at as high a literary character as circumstances enabled them to obtain, have uniformly rejected these unworthy fetters, and have not sought to throw any additional artificial temptations in the way of the honest, enlightened inquirer after truth. Such is the unavoidable influence of personal connexions, of early prepossessions, of the example of those by whose advice and instruction we are necessarily guided before we are able to form a conclusion or opinion which can be called really our own, that it is rarely possible for any one to come to the examination of the most important of all questions *perfectly* free from all bias or prejudice; and therefore it is not to be wondered at, that the majority of the young men who resort to these institutions are found to espouse the prevailing sentiments of the place; but it has commonly been our object, so to frame their constitution, and so to regulate the plan of study and instruction pursued in them, as to counteract, and not to give increased and unnecessary strength to these misleading influences. And there is good reason to believe, that in these endeavours the excellent persons to whom the education of our young divines has been committed, have not been altogether unsuccessful. They have not only refrained from attempting to exercise any undue influence over their pupils, but have endeavoured, while communicating instruction, to preserve their own minds in the desirable attitude of seekers after truth; not bound by the trammels of any sect or system, but ready to follow her

footsteps in whatever direction they appeared to lead.

This refusal to submit to shackles on inquiry, or to impose them on others, is so obviously suggested by a rational and well-founded confidence in the grounds and evidence of our opinions, that we are at a loss to understand how a different procedure can be ascribed to any thing else than a secret misgiving that all is not right. Truth, when fairly and impartially examined, must always have the advantage over error; and those who cannot trust their pupils to think and inquire for themselves, without first demanding pledges, calling for a confession of faith, and subjecting the youthful mind to all the trammels of human authority, can hardly wonder that, notwithstanding the stress they lay on their favourite doctrines, as fundamental principles of religion, and even essential to salvation, we should suspect them of not being so fully assured as they profess to be of the foundation on which they stand. Their conduct seems to indicate a doubt in their own minds as to the conclusion which an enlightened inquirer will be likely to adopt, who has no other motive or principle to guide him but an attachment to the truth, wherever it may be found.

The academical institutions connected with Dissenters of the Presbyterian and General Baptist denominations being chiefly supported by those individuals who are known to be zealously attached to Unitarian sentiments, naturally receive this name from the public, though they have rarely assumed it themselves. Their most judicious friends do not wish to see them avowedly identified with any sect or party; and would

rather not give them a title which might seem to imply a disposition in their conductors to promote the interests of *unitarianism* in preference to those of *truth*. We value and pursue the former, only because we believe it to be an important portion of the latter, which we seek for and embrace, whatever form it may appear to assume; satisfied that those who inquire after it with diligence, candour, and impartiality, have the best prospect of being protected from pernicious error, and that nothing which is really erroneous can be permanently beneficial to the best interests of mankind. The Unitarians claim the merit of being the only party who have acted uniformly and consistently on this just and enlightened principle. Some few of the academies established, partially at least, under the auspices of other sects, have, it is true, for awhile, and to a certain extent, followed the same plan. Among these honourable exceptions was that of Doddridge, at Northampton, and its successor at Daventry, under the conduct of Ashworth, Robins, and Belsham. But it is certainly not a little remarkable, that there is scarcely an instance of this kind which has not occasioned a considerable falling away from the rigour of genuine Calvinism, even among those who have remained nominally in the ranks of orthodoxy; while no small portion of the ingenuous youth, encouraged, or at least permitted, to examine both sides, and judge for themselves, have embraced some form of unitarianism. This being the case, we cannot much wonder that the present patrons of such institutions should have deserted the liberal plan of their predecessors, by drawing much closer and

tighter than formerly the bonds of sectarian distinction.

It is partly in consequence of this candid and liberal method, that we find among those who have, from time to time, undertaken the conduct of theological education in our academies, a large proportion of the most eminent and distinguished men, to whose names we point as the brightest ornaments of the body to which they belonged. Being equally free with their pupils from all obligation to maintain, at any rate, the peculiar tenets of a sect, except when recommended by evidence which approved itself to their own minds, they have never given way to the persuasion that their opinions were made up and incapable of further change. While teaching others, they have not abandoned the character of learners; keeping their minds at all times open to conviction, prepared, and at perfect liberty, to alter and modify their views on every subject as God should give light. Some of these worthies are well known to the public by their valuable writings; while others, who are less distinguished in this way, are still deserving of honourable mention, not merely from the credit they have reflected on the opinions they espoused, but from the influence, by no means inconsiderable, which they exercised on the progress of knowledge, as well as on the development and general diffusion of those more just and rational modes of investigation which are most likely to conduct the professed inquirer after truth to what ought to be the only object of his search. The name of *Hallet* has already been mentioned, as mainly instrumental to the progress of free inquiry and of liberal opinions,

by the just and impartial plan which he adopted in an academical institution at Exeter; and we now propose to introduce under the present title a few particulars of several other excellent men who have laboured, and not altogether without success, in the same good cause.

Of several of the theological tutors in our earlier academies it is not, indeed, easy at this distance of time to ascertain the precise opinions on controverted points, especially when (as is the case in many instances) they did not receive a permanent form, through the intervention of the press, but were confined, for the most part, to the lecture-room or the pulpit. This uncertainty is to be regretted for various reasons; but it is, perhaps, a natural consequence of that liberality in their conduct as teachers which has already been noticed with commendation. Even where their own opinions were most decided, they were naturally averse to assume before their pupils the character of a partizan; and hence they may sometimes have been led even into the opposite extreme, by studiously concealing their own private opinions, while endeavouring to present fairly and impartially the arguments on both sides as advanced by others. When, however, it appears that a large portion of the students educated in any institution, and those the most distinguished for talents and character, agreed in adopting religious opinions of a certain class, it seems reasonable to conclude that this was the prevailing tendency of the instructions they received, influenced, perhaps unconsciously, by the private opinions of the instructor.

Thus we find that Dr. THOMAS DIXON, who in the year 1710, and for several years afterwards conducted an academy at Whitehaven, was the preceptor of Taylor of Norwich, Benson, Rotheram, Winder of Liverpool, and several others well known in the succeeding age as decided Arians, we seem authorized to infer that he had himself a leaning towards the same principles. Little is known (at least we have not been able to meet with any record) of his early history. In 1719 he quitted Whitehaven to settle at Bolton in Lancashire, where he remained till his death, in 1733. It is not known that any production of his found its way before the public. His son, Mr. Thomas Dixon, was educated under the care of Dr. Rotheram, at Kendal, and in 1751 settled at Bolton, on the decease of his father's successor, Mr. Buck. Here he died in 1754, at the early age of thirty-three; *non annis, sed laude plenus*, according to the inscription on his monument in Bolton Chapel. Some years after his death an excellent piece of Scripture criticism was published from his papers, entitled "The Sovereignty of the Divine Administrations vindicated; or a rational Account (without the intervention of the Devil or of Demons) of our blessed Saviour's Temptation, of the possessed at Capernaum, and of the demoniac at Gadara." His view of the temptation nearly coincides with that since proposed by Mr. Cappe, representing it as a figurative account of the train of reflections which naturally suggested themselves to our Saviour's own mind, arising from his peculiar situation.

Another excellent person, whose name we are unwilling to pass over entirely in this connexion, though little can now be recovered of his history, is Dr. EBENEZER LATHAM. He was born in 1688; his father, from whom he received a religious, virtuous, and liberal education, was a worthy dissenting minister, settled at Wem, in Shropshire. He was early destined, both by his parents and his own inclination, to the work of the ministry; but being for some time apprehensive lest a weakness of voice, brought on by the small-pox, might disqualify him for it, he applied himself also to the study of medicine, and graduated as M.D. at the university of Glasgow. He lived, however, to be very useful and acceptable in both capacities; and added to them that by which his name is now chiefly remembered, the tutorship of a private academy, from which proceeded several of the most valuable and distinguished ministers among the Presbyterian dissenters of the last century. He settled at Findern, near Derby, where the academy had previously been conducted by Mr. Hill. Here he exercised his function as physician both to the souls and bodies of his neighbours, and appears to have been one of the few examples of the successful union of two professions, which might seem well fitted to go together, if the failure of most of the attempts to combine them did not shew that there were considerable practical difficulties in the way. But when we learn, that, not content with this double character of physician and pastor, Dr. Latham was also for a long series of years an active and successful labourer in another import-

ant and not less arduous field of usefulness, the training up of young men for the Christian ministry, we are naturally curious to know by what unwearied exertion and judicious distribution of his time he was enabled to discharge so many various, and it might be supposed often conflicting, duties. Unfortunately, we have not the means of gratifying this curiosity; for the only memorial we have left of him is a very slight sketch of his character, prefixed to a posthumous volume of sermons, by his pupil and brother-in-law, Mr. Willets, of Newcastle-under-line. It is much to be regretted, that one so competent to perform the office of biographer, and who, of course, enjoyed every opportunity of collecting all the information we should now wish to possess, was induced to be so sparing in his communications respecting one who appears to have been deservedly held in high estimation by his contemporaries for the learning, talents, and active energy which he displayed in the various important and laborious duties he undertook.

With the exception of an occasional sermon or two, we know not that Dr. Latham appeared before the public as an author in his lifetime. If he did not, it can excite little surprise, when we consider the importance and multiplicity of his other occupations. About twenty years after his death, (which occurred in 1754,) the volume of sermons already mentioned was published under the superintendence of Mr Willets, from whose very brief prefatory notice of the author the preceding particulars have been derived. The sermons shew him to have been an Arian of

the same school with Peirce, Chandler, and other liberal divines among the Presbyterians of the earlier part of the last century; and they are productions not unworthy to be ascribed to one "whose chief study was that of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; for which he was eminently qualified by a penetrating understanding, critical skill in the learned languages, and a good acquaintance with history and antiquity." Besides Mr. Willets, Messrs. Hawkes and Blyth, of Birmingham, Fownes of Shrewsbury, Turner of Wakefield, Bond of Stand, White of Derby, Harrison of Lancaster, Moore of Abingdon, and Ward of Yeovil, are known to have been pupils of Dr. Latham. All these, and doubtless many others, adopted anti-trinitarian opinions as the result of the liberal and unfettered system on which their education had been conducted.

CALEB ROTHERAM, D.D.

WAS born March 7, 1694, at the pleasant village of Great Salkeld, on the banks of the river Eden, in Cumberland, which, as we have seen, was also, a few years afterwards, the birth-place of Benson. He was instructed in classical

learning by Mr. Anthony Ireland, at that time master of the free Grammar School at Blencowe, and pursued his academical studies, preparatory to the exercise of the Christian ministry, under the direction of Dr. Dixon, at Whitehaven. In the year 1716, he accepted an invitation from the Protestant dissenting congregation at Kendal, and became their stated pastor; a station in which he remained through life. Nothing is recorded of him till the year 1733; but we cannot doubt that, as he continued the useful but uniform and noiseless tenor of his way, in the diligent discharge of the duties of his office, he advanced in reputation as in years; for at this period, in compliance with the request of many of the most eminent among the Dissenters, both ministers and laity, he began an academy for the instruction of youth in various branches of useful literature, but principally with a view to qualify them for the ministerial office. This institution he continued to conduct for the remainder of his life, with unabated assiduity, and well-deserved reputation and success; as is abundantly proved by the large proportion of his pupils who rose in the succeeding generation to stations of eminence and distinction in our churches, and who, in their turn, contributed greatly to the more extensive diffusion of liberal inquiry and rational religion. Dr. Rotheram appears to have been solicitously and affectionately concerned for the improvement and usefulness of those under his care; especially that they might be inspired with a spirit of liberty, and might clearly understand the genuine principles of Christianity. For this purpose he permitted,

encouraged, and assisted them to think freely on every subject connected with natural and revealed religion. He himself set them the example, both in his public and private instructions, not only of thinking freely, but of expressing the conclusions to which his inquiries led him, with candour and sincerity; an example which many of them followed, in their respective ministerial connexions, with a manly and honest frankness becoming disinterested inquirers after truth, and happily not without its reward in the beneficial influence which, in many instances, they were enabled to exercise.

The principles which ought to regulate the procedure of a Christian minister in this respect, both in his private studies and his public ministrations, have rarely been stated with more distinctness and ability than by one of Dr. Rotheram's pupils, Mr. Lowthion, of Newcastle, in a sermon on the reasonableness of ministers speaking freely to their people, preached at the ordination of Mr. Caleb Rotheram, his tutor's son and successor. And the names of Seddon, Dixon, Holland, Walker, &c., which appear in the list of students educated at this institution, are sufficient to satisfy any one in the slightest degree acquainted with the history of Protestant dissent during the last century, that these principles were consistently and fearlessly acted on by the excellent person who conducted it; at the same time that fruits like these, of his labours as an instructor, afford abundant proofs of his competency to guide his pupils to the acquisition of sound and accurate learning.

Dr. Rotheram was far from being a mere theologian. His attainments as a man of general science are understood to have been very considerable; and he enjoyed a high reputation as a teacher both of theoretical and of practical mathematics. His eminence in this particular department caused the academy at Kendal to be eagerly resorted to, not only by students for the ministry, but by many who were afterwards to fill various stations in civil and active life. And he not only instructed his pupils in the theory of mathematics and natural philosophy, but possessed a happy talent of illustrating them with great success by means of an extensive, and for that time a well-constructed, apparatus.

“As a minister (says Mr. Daye, in his funeral sermon for Dr. R.), his abilities were great; his delivery graceful; his performances instructive, lively, and entertaining; his sentiments nervous; his arguments strong, his expression just. With these talents, together with great moderation, impartiality, and calmness of judgment, he became not only a popular preacher, but was equally applauded by the most judicious. As a tutor, his capacity was equal to his department. His public spirit, desirous to propagate useful knowledge, and his tender concern for the interest of young persons, inclined him to take on himself the direction of youthful studies, for which he was excellently well qualified, and therefore encouraged by great and good men, and chosen as the means of carrying on their worthy design of enlarging useful knowledge, and propagating rational and religious light among men. He was

of a most communicative temper ; and his lectures were rather the open informations of a friend, than the dictates of a master. As he was an impartial lover of truth, he encouraged the most free and unbounded inquiry after it, in every branch of science. To this may be chiefly ascribed his great success in this undertaking ; which appears from the number of those who have been raised to a degree of eminence among the Dissenters, from the experience they derived principally from him.

“ As a Protestant Dissenter, he was a credit to his profession ; for he was a friend, a faithful friend to liberty, the distinguishing principle of that profession.

“ As a member of civil society, he was a zealous friend to public happiness and tranquillity ; particularly as a good townsman, his loss will be regretted. So much did he delight in its prosperity, wishing well to its liberties, studying its interests, and being ready to defend its just rights, that it is not strange his zeal for the good of the town, and his abilities to promote that good (being so well known and respected) should often meet with many considerable opportunities in which they were exerted with success. Thus he was a benefit to the public.

“ And in his more private life, as the head of a numerous family, he was most tenderly affectionate in every relation. He was affable, agreeable, and friendly to all, and his conversation always afforded pleasure and satisfaction.”

Dr. Rotheram's labours, though so valuable in their results, and highly creditable to his own

character and reputation as a scholar and a divine, were almost exclusively addressed to his congregation and his pupils. The only piece of his that we have seen in print, is a Latin inaugural Dissertation, “De Religionis Christianæ Evidentiâ,” which he published and defended in the usual forms of academical disputation, when he took his degree of Doctor in Divinity, in the College at Edinburgh, May 27, 1743. In this dissertation he ably refutes the notion strongly insisted on by many sceptical writers, and somewhat incautiously admitted even by Mr. Locke, “that the probability of facts depending on human testimony must gradually lessen in proportion to the distance of the time when they happened, and at last become entirely evanescent.” With respect to traditional evidence, *properly so called*, it may be admitted that this is true; namely, when our knowledge of the fact attested is derived from the oral testimony of a *single line* of dependent witnesses; but it is not true of evidence arising from general notoriety; where the fact attested was seen by a number of original witnesses, each of whom communicates his information to many others, who, in their turn, diffuse it through a variety of channels; because, in this case it is probable that the number of witnesses may increase in the same, or even in a greater proportion than the credibility of each individual witness diminishes. Still less can it be admitted in the case of *written* testimony; where, if the original document no longer exists, copies taken from it may have been multiplied indefinitely, and versions made of it into a great variety of languages;

so that the evidence shall even increase instead of diminishing with the lapse of time.

In the latter end of the year 1751, Dr. Rotheram's health, which had received a severe shock from some very heavy family afflictions, began rapidly to decline. In the following spring, as soon as the season would permit, he undertook a journey to Hexham, in Northumberland, where his eldest son was then settled as a physician; and his friends were not without all hope that he might be restored to his former strength and usefulness. But his disorder returning, he died there on the 8th of June, 1752. He was interred in the Abbey Church of Hexham, where a mural monument bears the following inscription to his memory :—

To the Memory of
Caleb Rotheram, late of Kendal, D.D.
Who successfully united
The force of Genius and Industry
In the Cause of
Religion, Truth, and Liberty.
The Holy Scriptures
Were his favourite Study,
The Doctrine which he taught
And the Rule of his Life.
With ardent Piety,
Extensive Knowledge,
Unlimited Benevolence,
And Rational Affection,
He adorned the characters
Of Minister, Tutor, Parent, and Friend.
He died June viii, MDCCLII.
Aged LVIII.

Dr. Rotheram left three sons, of whom the eldest, as abovementioned, was a physician, first at Hexham, afterwards at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was a man of high character and reputation in

his profession, and an eminent and successful practitioner. Another son went into the army; and the third followed his father's profession, and, after a short interval, succeeded him as minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Kendal. But the academy fell with its founder, on whose personal exertions, reputation, and influence, it almost entirely depended. During its brief course of eighteen years, fifty-six students derived from it their preparation for the Christian ministry; of whom a catalogue, accompanied by an interesting series of biographical notices, is inserted in the *Monthly Repository*, O.S., vol. v. Besides these, there were about a hundred and twenty lay students, of whom no more particular account has been preserved; but it is believed that many of them filled respectable, and some of them distinguished, stations in various departments of professional and active life.

Among the worthies who seem to require from us a place under this article, I cannot avoid including Mr. SAMUEL CLARK. Though he was not directly concerned in theological instruction, yet from his talents, and the acknowledged liberality of his views and principles, he was doubtless mainly instrumental in promoting the kindred spirit which is well known to have characterized both the academical institutions with which for some years he was successively connected; and which stand out in this respect as honourable exceptions from the plan on which other establishments under similar auspices have most commonly been conducted.

Mr. Clark was descended from a family which in all its generations had been honourably connected with the history of religious liberty and Protestant dissent. His remote ancestor, Mr. Samuel Clark, of Bennet-Fink, in the City of London, was ejected from his living on the memorable day of St. Bartholomew, 1662, and was followed in the same honourable testimony by two sons, Samuel, Rector of Grendon, in Buckinghamshire, and John, Rector of Codgrave, in Nottinghamshire. The former of these was the author of the well-known Annotations on the Bible. His grandson, Dr. Samuel Clark, was minister at St. Albans, and a man of great worth, eminence, and piety. He is remembered as having been the early patron, adviser, and friend of Doddridge; to whom, in the sermon preached on occasion of his death, he thus records his obligations:—"I may properly call him my friend and father, if all the offices of paternal tenderness and care can merit that title. To him I may truly say that, under God, I owe even myself, and all my opportunities of public usefulness in the church; to him who was not only the instructor of my childhood and youth in the principles of religion, but my guardian when a helpless orphan, as well as the generous, tender, and faithful friend of all my advancing years." Dr. Clark published three excellent sermons "On the Nature and Causes of Irresolution in Religion;" and also a little volume entitled "A Collection of Scripture Promises," arranged under their proper heads; a work which still retains its place, and causes its author's name to be remembered with grateful

regard by not a few who have found it a valuable help to practical religion. It may doubtless be objected to it, that in various instances detached texts are put down under the heads to which they are referred, because the sound of the words made them apparently applicable to a purpose which the author never intended, and with which, in their natural connexion, they have nothing to do. This is an error which is too apt to arise from the common practice of treating the sacred writings as though they were a collection of detached aphorisms; and Dr. Clark has sometimes committed it, but not, perhaps, so often as to interfere materially with the general value of the book. His theological sentiments were most probably what is called moderate Calvinism; but in his mind they were so modified as to be not inconsistent with that genuine liberality of spirit which refuses to sit in judgment on a brother, or denounce him for modes of faith as unworthy of the grace of God.

An interesting specimen of his habits of thought and feeling on these points is preserved in the following extract of a letter to Doddridge on occasion of a remarkable outbreak of bigoted intolerance in Scotland:

“You have seen, I suppose, what the public prints inform us of relating to the proceedings of the General Assembly in Scotland against Mr. Patrick Simpson. They are going to deprive the church of one of the most valuable persons in it, because he does not think it necessary to tie himself down exactly to their Shibboleth, nor oblige himself to conform to all the scholastic ways of speak-

ing concerning some things about which Scripture is silent. By what I saw and heard of him when in Scotland, he is a much better judge of those matters than the greater part of those who are to judge him. His crime is, that he is disposed to think for himself; but yet he is very cautious to avoid giving offence, which I perceive is, by the bigots, interpreted into cunning and dissimulation. One would think the experience of so many ages should be sufficient to make the world wiser; and that those who pretend to govern in the church should learn at last that their power might be much better exercised than in destroying the usefulness of the best men in it, merely for nice speculations about unrevealed or disputable points. Suppose a person should not speak with exact propriety concerning the manner of Christ's existence, a point so much above our reach, yet if he loves him, trusts in him, and sincerely obeys him, what harm does religion suffer by it? But I need not enlarge upon this to you, who are so well instructed in the unreasonableness of bigotry to a set of speculative notions."*

Mr. Samuel Clark, son of Dr. Clark, was born in 1727, and in 1745 was sent to the academy at Northampton, where he improved his opportunities with so much diligence and success, that, in 1750, when Dr. Doddridge was obliged to abandon his laborious duties, and seek for health in a warmer climate, he entrusted Mr. Clark, at the early age of twenty-three, with the charge not only of his academy, but of his congregation.

* Biographia Britannica, art. *Doddridge*.

This circumstance is a remarkable indication of the liberal turn of Doddridge's truly Christian and candid mind; for he could not be ignorant that his young friend and pupil, in whom he was about to repose so important a trust, had already embraced sentiments on various doctrinal points very far removed from the standard of Calvinistic orthodoxy. Nevertheless, we are told by Mr. Orton that he repeatedly mentioned it to his friends as "a singular happiness that God had given him an assistant to whom he could cheerfully consign the care of his academy and congregation, and whose great prudence and wise disposition of affairs made him quite easy as to both."

In both these important trusts, there is reason to believe that Mr. Clark acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, and of the public. As a tutor, indeed, he had only to follow the example which had been set him; without attempting either to conceal or to impose his own opinions, to encourage and enable his pupils to examine as far as possible the *whole* evidence on each question, and then judge for themselves. It appears, however, that the majority of Dr. Doddridge's congregation were of a higher-toned orthodoxy, or at any rate laid a greater stress on their doctrinal peculiarities than their late pastor; for when his decease called on them permanently to supply his place, they rejected Mr. Clark, and appointed a successor of much more rigid theological views than either himself or his principal. Mr. Clark's retirement seems to have been the occasion of the removal of the academy, which took place at this time, from Northampton to Daventry. Here it was placed under the care of

Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Ashworth, as theological tutor; Mr. Clark, however, continuing for several years his valuable assistance. To his merits in this capacity Dr. Ashworth bears the following honourable testimony: "When the academy was removed to Daventry, he kindly continued as assistant in it for five years; and I take pleasure in acknowledging in this public manner, that his friendship, his abilities, and his prudent counsels, were of essential service, and mainly contributed to the reputation and success, whatever they may have been, with which that institution has been conducted."—Funeral Sermon for Mr. Clark, p. 33.

Dr. Priestley, who appears to have been one of the first class of students entered under the new administration at Daventry, gives an interesting account of the plan of study pursued there, which, though defective in some important points, was unexceptionable as to the spirit in which it was conducted.

"In my time, the academy was in a state peculiarly favourable to the serious pursuit of truth, as the students were about equally divided on every question of much importance, such as liberty and necessity, the sleep of the soul, and all the articles of theological orthodoxy and heresy; in consequence of which, all these topics were the subject of continual discussion. Our tutors also were of different opinions; Dr. Ashworth taking the orthodox side of every question, and Mr. Clark, the subtutor, that of heresy, though always with the greatest modesty. Both of our tutors being young, at least as tutors, and some of the senior students excelling more than they could pretend to do in several branches of study, they indulged

us in the greatest freedoms, so that our lectures often had the air of friendly conversations on the subjects to which they related. We were permitted to ask whatever questions and to make whatever remarks we pleased; and we did it with the greatest, but without any offensive, freedom. The general plan of our studies, which may be seen in Dr. Doddridge's published lectures, was exceedingly favourable to free inquiry, as we were referred to authors on both sides of every question, and were even required to give an account of them."

How far the *plan* of Dr. Doddridge's lectures was particularly favourable to free inquiry might, perhaps, be doubted by some, who looked only to its dogmatical form, to the decisive dictum pronounced from the chair on each controverted topic, and especially to the array of propositions, demonstrations, &c., which are drawn up in mathematical form, as though it were pretended to give the air of demonstrative evidence to subjects on which the wise and learned have ever been at issue. But the abundance and impartiality of the references afford great facilities to a teacher who is sincerely disposed to give his pupils an opportunity of studying the *whole* of a subject; and as there is never any attempt to keep back part of the evidence, or to conceal the fact of the widely different opinions which have been maintained and defended, the student soon learns to estimate at its just value the unconditional form in which certain dogmas are propounded in the text. On the other hand, while anxious not to mislead and pervert by an unfair *one-sided* statement, there is certainly an extreme to be avoided

in the opposite direction. Students of any important but controverted subject, who *begin* their inquiry by raking together all the various and conflicting opinions which have ever been advanced by contending parties, without any clue to guide them through the labyrinth, may, perhaps, be in danger of abandoning in despair the search after that truth which is offered to them from such various and opposite quarters, and sinking into a hopeless scepticism. But, surely, it is possible for a teacher, without compromising his pretensions to impartiality, to steer his course successfully between these opposing dangers. In every inquiry there are certain leading principles of primary importance, which are capable of being clearly marked out and ascertained by sufficient and satisfactory evidence. These it will be his business to bring prominently forward, that they may furnish some fixed points of reference amidst the fluctuation of controversy. There are, moreover, certain dispositions and habits of mind which are essential to a successful pursuit of any investigation of this sort, and which it will be his earnest endeavour diligently to cultivate in his pupils, that they may not only be impressed with an eager and inquisitive curiosity, but be ready to receive and submit themselves to the truth, from whatever quarter and in whatever form it may present itself. Thus may the "free discussion" above described be effectually prevented from degenerating into that "unsanctified speculation and debate,"* which, according to some,

* See R. Hall's Memoir of the Rev. T. N. Toller; also some spirited remarks on this passage, by Dr. Evans and Mr. Kentish, *Mon. Rep.* xix. pp. 83, 229.

must characterize all seminaries which are not tied down to the profession of a particular system or creed.

In the year 1757 Mr. Clark quitted the academy on being invited to become one of the ministers of the congregation assembling in the Old Meeting-house at Birmingham, as joint-pastor with the Rev. W. Howell. A connexion at this time subsisted between this congregation and that at Oldbury, about five miles from Birmingham, the two ministers officiating alternately at each place. Here he continued for twelve years the highly popular and useful minister of an attached congregation. In 1761, the reputation which he had acquired during his connexion with the academies of Northampton and Daventry pointed him out to the trustees of the Warrington academy, on the decease of Dr. Taylor, as the fittest person to succeed him as theological tutor in that institution. He, however, declined the invitation, notwithstanding the earnest persuasions of his friend Dr. Aikin. However competent Mr. Clark might have been, his refusal could hardly be regretted by the friends of the institution, when it led to the appointment of Dr. Aikin himself, and the consequent nomination of Dr. Priestley to fill the station which he had quitted.

On December 3, 1769, as he was setting out for Oldbury, Mr. Clark was thrown from his horse in one of the streets of Birmingham, and was taken up insensible. After languishing for three days, he died in consequence of the injury he had received. A funeral sermon was preached on the occasion of his death, by his former colleague, Dr. Ashworth, which contains a high, but

there is every reason to believe a just, eulogium on his character, both as a tutor and a minister.

“ I need not tell you that the heart of his colleague hath safely trusted in him ; and that they have lived together for more than twelve years in the most entire harmony, friendship, and confidence. I need not tell you how he preached the word ; was instant in season and out of season ; what pains he took to know the state of his flock, and how assiduously he attended to all the cases which might more especially demand a pastor’s care ; how constantly and affectionately he attended the sick ; how diligently he sought out the distressed ; how liberally he imparted to them of the substance with which God had blessed him ; and with what spirit he entered into all schemes of public charity, especially for the relief of the sick and the instruction of the poor. I hope I need not remind you who are entering upon the world, what various schemes he formed for your benefit, or the prudence and resolution with which he carried them into execution. That his years were so few, that he was cut off in the prime of his life and usefulness, and in such an awful manner, are to us matter of unfeigned and bitter lamentation. But let us be silent, considering that God hath done it.”

Mr. Clark, it is believed, published nothing, except a sermon preached at Daventry, on the earthquake at Lisbon, Nov. 1, 1755. There are also one or two sermons of his in a publication entitled the Protestant System, by his brother-in-law, Dr. Rose. In 1763, he superintended the publication of the first edition of Doddridge’s Lectures.

Dr. JOHN AIKIN, first classical, and afterwards for many years theological, tutor in the academy at Warrington, well deserves commemoration, as the person to whom that institution owed, if not its chief celebrity, its highest claims to distinction as a seminary of sound and useful learning. He was born in London, December 28, 1713. His father was a native of Kirkcudbright, in Scotland, who settled in London as a linen-draper, and married the daughter of a London citizen. Young Aikin was originally intended for his father's business, but was afterwards transferred to a merchant's counting-house as foreign clerk; in the exercise of which duty he acquired a thorough mastery of and facility in the French tongue, for which he was afterwards remarkable. Here, however, he cannot have remained for any great length of time, for a rooted passion for literature and a delicate state of health seem to have led to an early change in his destination. He was sent to a school at St. Albans, kept by an ingenious man who had been on the stage, and was fond of exercising his pupils in theatrical declamation; which circumstance may probably have tended to strengthen an early taste for poetry, and also to cultivate that force and clearness of enunciation for which the subject of this memoir was afterwards eminently distinguished. In 1732 he was removed to Dr. Doddridge's academy at Northampton, but probably not, in the first instance, with a view to the Christian ministry, as there is reason to believe that he was at one time intended for the legal profession. At all events, his attention was for some time closely directed to studies of this kind; as he possessed a deep and extensive know-

ledge of the constitution and laws of England, as well as of the general principles of jurisprudence, which he was afterwards accustomed to introduce much more fully and copiously than is usual in his academical lectures. He had even made some considerable progress in an elementary work, constructed much upon the plan afterwards adopted by Blackstone in his celebrated Commentaries on the Laws of England.

At Northampton, however, it is not to be wondered at, that the bent of his mind became more and more decided for sacred literature ; so that he obtained his father's permission to change his views, and devote himself to the Christian ministry. After finishing his course with Dr. Doddridge, he completed with distinction an extensive plan of study at the University of Aberdeen. How long he remained here we are not enabled to ascertain, as he does not appear to have become a regular member of the university, but merely to have taken up his residence in its vicinity as a private student, attending such lectures as he thought proper. He had here also the advantage of cultivating the society of many eminent persons who at that time gave a more than ordinary lustre to this seat of learning : among the rest, Dr. T. Blackwell, Dr. G. Turnbull, Dr. Reid, Messrs. Duncan and David Fordyce, and Mrs. Cockburne, well known as an able defender of the metaphysical principles of Locke and Clarke.

On his return from Aberdeen, Mr. Aikin became for a short time an assistant to his former friend and tutor, Dr. Doddridge ; agreeably to the practice which that eminent man was accustomed to pursue in the conduct of his academy, by en-

gaging in succession for several years such students as had particularly distinguished themselves by diligence, proficiency, and propriety of conduct, during the period of their academical course. Besides Mr. Aikin, Mr. Job Orton, Professor James Robertson of Edinburgh, and Mr. Samuel Clark, the subject of the preceding article, obtained this distinguishing mark of their tutor's approbation; and Mr. Orton observes, that "they thought themselves happy in his friendship, and in the opportunities they had, by his conversation, instructions, and example, to improve themselves, while they were assisting in the education of others." It is probable that he left Northampton in 1739, when Mr. Orton succeeded him.

During this engagement, Mr. Aikin preached occasionally in various places, and is said to have been highly acceptable both for matter and manner. He was actually chosen by the congregation at Leicester, which was afterwards served for so many years with such ability by the Rev. Hugh Worthington; but just as he was about to enter on the duties of his office, a fall from his horse gave him an injury in the breast, which caused him to spit blood, and, in his opinion, disqualified him for the regular labours of the pulpit. He, therefore, gave up the design of settling with a congregation; and engaged in a school, for a short time, as partner with a Mr. Lee, of Farn-don, near Harborough, in Leicestershire. Having married the daughter of the Rev. John Jennings, (the able tutor and predecessor of Doddridge) he removed to Kilworth, where he raised a flourishing school by assiduities which were almost too much for his tender health; for after his accident

abovementioned much speaking was always a toil to him, and he soon came to suffer under asthmatic attacks, which he always believed to have a consumptive tendency. His school attained a high reputation, well merited by his diligence, learning, and abilities, and by the excellence of his moral character. It has been said,* that he was originally a man of warm temper, and occasionally severe in the correction of his scholars. However this may have been, there is no reason to doubt that his school was always so conducted, as to secure not only the due subordination and instruction, but the warm attachment and even veneration of the general body. A man whose personal qualities, endowments, and deportment, were so peculiarly fitted to give him an undisputed ascendancy and authority over all with whom he was connected, is not likely to have had frequent occasion to resort to the unpleasant necessity of corporal punishment; and there is good ground for believing that the discipline of his school was far from being rigorous, compared with the manners of the time. It may naturally be presumed that the majority of his pupils, in a private school situated in a manufacturing district, were destined for trade or other departments of active life. Some few, however, are known at this distance of time, who were afterwards respected as men of eminent learning and attainments; particularly Mr. Cappe of York, Mr. Hirons of St. Albans, and Dr. Cogan, well known as author of a valuable Treatise on the Passions, and of the admirable Letters by a Layman to Mr.

* Wakefield's Life, vol. i. p. 218.

Wilberforce on the Doctrine of Hereditary Depravity. One of his particular friends, during his residence at Kilworth, was Dr. (then Mr.) Pulteney, of Leicester, who afterwards distinguished himself as an eminent naturalist and physician.

After many years thus laboriously spent, he removed to Warrington, in the month of August 1758; chiefly induced by the expectation of living more to himself, (for he determined to have no boarders, though much solicited,) and of enjoying some society suited to his highly cultivated taste. On his arrival, the establishment of the academy (consisting, in addition to Mr. Aikin, of Dr. Taylor, theological tutor, and Mr. Holt, mathematical tutor) was considered as complete, as far, at least, as the funds of the institution would admit. The new tutor immediately entered on the classical department; besides which, he had two classes in the French language, gave lectures on grammar, oratory, and criticism, and also took those on logic and history from Mr. Holt.

His mode of lecturing on the Greek and Latin classics was highly interesting, and had a great effect in promoting among his pupils a taste for the critical study of those venerable remains of antiquity. A perfect master of the languages in which they were written, and familiarly acquainted with their contents, he contrived to put his young friends in possession of the necessary previous requisites to the thorough understanding of the several works which he thus introduced to their attention. One or two lectures were usually devoted to some general account of the author, the period in which he lived, the occasion of his writing, and the manner in which

he treated his subject ; which were naturally followed by remarks on the species of composition, whether historical, oratorical, or philosophical, if prose, or, if poetry, epic, dramatic, lyric, satirical, &c. These preliminaries dispatched, he made the students read successively, paragraph by paragraph, under his correction, the author under consideration, and pointed out the beauties, cleared up the difficulties, and illustrated the scope and tendency of the argument, with uncommon clearness and precision. His choice of books, also, was generally very judicious : avoiding those authors that are usually read at schools, he rather chose to lead them to an acquaintance with such as might not otherwise be likely to fall in their way ; and of these he preferred those which bore some relation to the leading objects of their other studies. In history, for instance, he chose such portions of Herodotus as might illustrate those parts of the Old Testament which were connected with Assyria and Egypt ; the fine funeral orations of Thucydides, Plato, and Lysias ; the philosophical and ethical treatises of Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and Maximus Tyrius, with Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric, and Longinus. When there were several young men designed for the law, he more than once read with them Justinian's Institutes. In reading the ancient poets, his extensive acquaintance with modern poetry enabled him to enliven his lectures with parallel passages ; and his fine taste led him to dwell with peculiar delight on those passages of either ancient or modern poets which appeared most striking for noble sentiments or just reflections. In reading the philoso-

phical treatises of the ancients, he enlarged so much as to render his lectures almost a second course, in a varied form, of natural religion and ethics. And he all along made it a principal object incidentally to illustrate scripture passages by the heathen writers, and to point out the superiority of Christian to Heathen philosophy.

On the death of Dr. Taylor, and the refusal of Mr. Clark, Mr. Aikin was unanimously chosen to fill the vacant chair of theology; which he continued to occupy to the end of his life, greatly to his own honour, and to the credit and advantage of the institution. His theological views at this period appear to have been what are called Arian, in which he agreed at that time, as we are informed by Dr. Priestley, with his fellow-tutors, and with all the neighbouring Presbyterian ministers, except Mr. Seddon of Manchester. Dr. Aikin added some obscure notions on the doctrine of atonement, the only subject of much consequence, says Dr. Priestley, on which they differed. On all these points, however, there is reason to believe that his views, like those of his distinguished coadjutor and friend, in the course of that renewed and careful inquiry to which his office almost necessarily led him, were considerably modified. But whatever they were, or afterwards became, they in no degree interfered with the strict impartiality with which he endeavoured to lay before his pupils the whole of the evidence on these as well as other controverted questions, and not only to encourage but to exhort and charge them to examine without bias or prejudice, and judge for themselves. To this course it is not unreasonable to presume that he

might more successfully and uniformly adhere, from the very circumstance that he had not appeared before the public as a writer on dogmatic or controversial theology; and therefore not being in any degree pledged, for the sake of an imagined consistency, to maintain any particular doctrine or system, had the less temptation to deviate from the strict line in recommending it to his pupils. It is not intended to insinuate that Dr. Taylor did not endeavour to the utmost of his power to act up to the full spirit of the admirable and impressive exhortation already quoted, which he was accustomed to address to his class at the commencement of their course; but in doing so he must have had difficulties and temptations to contend with, to which it may be presumed that his successor was less exposed.

Mr. Aikin's qualifications for the office he now undertook were certainly of a high order. To an accurate and profound knowledge of sacred literature he added an extensive acquaintance with theological writers of all parties; and, what is of still greater importance, a mind deeply imbued with a spirit of true and rational devotion, and earnestly zealous to make his pupils not merely good scholars and critics, but well-instructed servants of the church and of Christ, thoroughly furnished for the work in which they were to be engaged. As a lecturer, he greatly excelled; and if he had enjoyed the opportunity of displaying his talents in a more extensive and conspicuous theatre, would doubtless have risen to high eminence and fame. But these were not the rewards which he sought for; and he was well contented to preserve a due regard for truth and con-

sistency, and the right of expressing the genuine convictions of his mind, while he exercised for the benefit of a few, and in a limited sphere, those splendid accomplishments which, in other circumstances, might have procured him no ordinary share of popular applause and distinction.

“Dr. Aikin used some printed text-book for most of his lectures; for others he had written analyses of his own. Upon all of these he enlarged much in his discourse, with great fluency, propriety, and impression. His modes of illustration were uncommonly distinct and various, and pointedly adapted to the different talents of his pupils. He was always interesting, and frequently animated. He stated the arguments on both sides of any disputed point, with great clearness and precision. After this, his custom was to stop, and say, ‘Gentlemen, have I explained the subject to your satisfaction?’ or some equivalent expression. Any one who did not fully comprehend him was asked to state his difficulty. He then, in order to illustrate further, proceeded upon a quite different mode of explanation, which he would vary again, if requested by any present. In any disputed point of metaphysics, morals, or theology, he avoided any dictatorial declaration of his own opinion, and freely encouraged his pupils to form their own. When any student embraced a sentiment different to what he imagined to be his tutor’s, he, without any scruple, mentioned it, together with his reasons for it. A difference of opinion in the pupil produced no diminution of regard in the tutor, or of attention to his instruction. So attractive, indeed, was his manner of teaching, that I have seen gentlemen who, some

years after they had left the academy, when they were occasionally passing through Warrington, and staying there only a few hours, joined the students in attending his lecture.”*

Every Saturday, the divinity students were expected to bring the exercises, which had been prescribed to them, or which they had chosen for themselves. These, for the students of the first year, were generally essays on subjects connected with their course, or Latin translations, or short original essays in that language;—in the second and third years, they were schemes or skeletons, more or less clothed, of sermons; in the fourth and fifth, sermons at length, and sometimes critical dissertations. These were read by the students, and carefully criticised by the tutor; the defects of composition and method pointed out; and often references made to preachers of reputation, French or English, who had treated the same text or subject. Sometimes, when the subject interested him, he would lay out a method of his own, and in a happy strain of dignified eloquence, pursue the subject, *extempore*, to a considerable extent. After the exercises were examined, he would generally turn to some of the finest passages of the English poets, Milton, Pope, Thomson, Young, and Akenside; and, having first himself read a considerable portion, with singular propriety of tone and emphasis, he heard each of the students read in order, and freely, but good-humouredly, commented on their manner of reading, pointed out their defects, and the proper mode of remedying them. This lecture was

* See an extract from a communication of the late Mr. Simpson, of Bath, *Mon. Repository*, O. S., vol. viii. p. 166.

often the most satisfactory and improving of any in the whole week.

But the advantages which the students derived from their tutor were not confined to the lecture room; he had frequent small parties to drink tea with him, when he was accustomed quite to unbend, and enter with them into the most free, familiar conversation. Then was the time when difficulties were most freely communicated, and with the most unwearied patience listened to and obviated; his opinion of books, or of courses of reading on particular subjects, was asked and frankly given; sometimes (but this was generally when younger students were of the party) he took the lead in conversation, and himself pointed out books which might be read with advantage; and frequently he enlivened the social hour with anecdotes of his own youthful studies, and how he had surmounted or suffered by them; of the varieties of character among his fellow-students, and (by way, sometimes of encouragement, sometimes of warning) the manner in which they had turned out in the subsequent periods of life.

This excellent man lived always in perfect harmony with his colleagues and with the trustees, and on all occasions acted as a general friend and bond of union. His influence over the students, which was very great, arose not merely from the excellence of his instructions, but from the kind concern which he took in their welfare, and the affectionate interest with which he always tempered the authority which appeared in his private advices, or, where he saw it necessary, his reproofs and remonstrances. Being, of course, constantly spoken of in the language of warm at-

tachment and reverence by the students who were his immediate pupils, he became the object of a veneration bordering upon awe among those who were not; and though his delicate state of health prevented his frequent personal intercourse with the students at large, and absolutely precluded his taking part in the ordinary routine of academical discipline, yet this very circumstance gave additional weight to his authority when occasions arose that called for his interference; which was always exercised after a previous cool, clear-sighted investigation, which put him in possession of the whole case; after which his decision was made with promptitude and firmness; and the measures dictated by it were declared and executed with a dignity and propriety peculiar to himself, and always perfectly efficient.

It was in the year 1774 that the university of Aberdeen conferred on one who, though but a temporary resident, might well be reckoned among her most distinguished *alumni*, the honorary degree of D.D. This appears to have been done on the motion of his friend, and former fellow-student, Professor Thomas Gordon; and it is said that when he obtained his diploma, being totally unapprised that any such thing was in agitation, he was much discomposed, and could scarcely be prevailed on to assume the title. No man, indeed, was ever more averse to parade of any kind.

After Mr. Walker's departure from the academy in 1773, the funds of the institution being not thought adequate to the maintenance of a third tutor, Dr. Enfield undertook the mathematical department, and Dr. Aikin exonerated him of the classical part of his former charge. Though this

unreasonable imposition on two willing and generous minds materially injured the health of both, yet for some time Dr. Aikin was kept in a tolerably comfortable state by great care and regular gentle exercise on horseback. But about the year 1778, his attacks of asthma becoming more frequent and violent, he obtained for a short time the assistance of his late pupil Mr. Houghton; and in 1779 Mr. Wakefield was chosen a regular third tutor. The asthmatic paroxysms, however, increasing, he grew gradually less able to discharge, without great difficulty, the duties of his proper province, and on the 14th of December 1780, he closed a life of honour and usefulness, in a manner becoming his Christian profession. His death was felt as a severe blow by the lovers of truth and learning, but was more especially an irreparable loss to those who were under his immediate care.

His funeral sermon, preached by his friend and colleague, Dr. Enfield, was published, and bears on its title page the following strikingly characteristic and appropriate motto from Cicero:—"Erant in eo multæ literæ, nec eæ vulgares, sed interiores quædam et reconditæ; summa verborum et gravitas et elegantia; atque hæc omnia vitæ decorabat dignitas et integritas. Quanta severitas in vultu! quantum pondus in verbis! quam nihil non consideratum exibat ex ore!"*

The following just and well-merited character of Dr. Aikin forms one of the series of striking and spirited portraits which Mr. Wakefield has sketched of the eminent men who were succes-

* Cicero de claris Oratoribus, 76.

sively connected with the Warrington academy, in his memoirs of his own life:

“Our divinity tutor, Dr. Aikin, was a gentleman whose endowments as a man and as a scholar, according to my sincere judgment of him, it is not easy to exaggerate by panegyric. In his life he was rigorously virtuous, and, when I knew him, under as perfect a self-government as a participation of human weaknesses can well allow. He has acknowledged to me his irascible propensities in early life, and the difficulties which he encountered in this discipline of his temper. Religion had brought every wayward idea and irregular passion into subjection to the laws of reason, and had erected her trophy in the citadel of his mind. As his whole conduct was strictly moral, so the influences of religion upon his mind were permanent and awful. He was benevolent; candid in all his judgments on the characters of others; of great hospitality, as I myself experienced; quick to discern, and ready to acknowledge true merit, wherever it resided; not tenacious of his own opinion, but patiently attentive, beyond almost any man I ever knew, to the reasonings of an opponent; perfectly open to conviction; of an affability, softened by a modest opinion of himself, that endeared him to all; and a politeness of demeanour seldom found even in an elevated station.

“His intellectual attainments were of a very superior quality indeed. His acquaintance with all the evidences of revelation, with morals, politics, and metaphysics, was most accurate and extensive. Every path of polite literature had been traversed by him, and traversed with success. He understood the Hebrew and French languages to perfection; and had an intimacy with the best

authors of Greece and Rome, superior to what I have ever known in any dissenting minister from my own experience. His taste for composition was correct and elegant; and his repetition of beautiful passages, though accompanied with a theatrical stateliness and pomp, highly animated, and expressive of sensibility."

It cannot be enough regretted that these rich endowments were never exercised for the benefit of the public at large. The only productions of Dr. Aikin's pen committed to the press were a note in his son's Biographical Memoirs of Medicine, a Latin preface to his son's selections from Pliny, and some occasional articles in the Monthly Review. The consequence of this has been, that the *first* Dr. Aikin, though a man of really first-rate eminence, is scarcely known to the public, except in connexion with his more celebrated and distinguished descendants. It cannot be necessary to inform any one that this excellent person left a son and a daughter, John Aikin, M.D., and Anna Lætitia Aikin, afterwards still better known as Mrs. Barbauld, who inherited their father's talents, and much more than their father's celebrity; though by no means more than their many excellent productions and valuable services, both to the literary and the youthful public, have well deserved. Nor can it be said, that, in a succeeding generation, the name of Aikin has failed to maintain its honourable place in the general estimation. The living worthies who still bear it are too well known by their excellent writings to require a more particular commemoration in this place. To all the readers of these pages their names must be familiar,

MICAIAH TOWGOOD

Is a name which can scarcely fail to be familiar to every one who has taken the slightest interest in the history of Protestant Dissenters, as borne by a distinguished champion of their cause; to whom they owe one of the ablest and most satisfactory vindications, not only of their secession from the church of England, but of the grounds on which they disapprove of all civil establishments of religion, whatever may be their constitution, principles, or tenets. His celebrated "Dissenting Gentleman's Letters" have received, and continue to enjoy, a well-deserved popularity; and have, perhaps, done more than any other single work to promote just views of this subject, and to enable the Nonconformists of later times to give a reason for their separation, which might repel objections, satisfy their own minds, and maintain them steady in the public profession of their principles, notwithstanding the many temptations to fall away to a more fashionable religion. But Mr. Towgood has other and not less considerable claims on our respectful remembrance. He knew how not only to assert but to exercise the privilege of enlightened impartial inquiry; and in his search after Christian truth he never forgot to cultivate Christian charity, and to make the principles he professed the means of forming and purifying the best affections of the heart. These views and feelings he carried into all the relations

of life, and more especially displayed their influence in his active and conscientious discharge of the duties of the Christian ministry.

The subject of this memoir was born at Axminster, in Devonshire, December 17, 1700. His grandfather, the Rev. Matthew Towgood, was one of the venerable two thousand who witnessed a good confession on St. Bartholomew's-day, 1662. His descendant thus concludes a brief memoir of him inserted in Palmer's Nonconformist's Memorial,—“ I esteem it a greater honour to descend from one of these noble confessors than to have had a coronet or garter in the line of my ancestry. I look forward with joy to the approaching happy day, when that glorious list of heroes will shine with distinguished honours, and mount up to thrones of power, while their titled and en-ribboned persecutors will sink into shame, and be glad to hide their faces in the deepest obscurity.” After having gone through the usual preparatory studies in the academy at Taunton, under the direction of the Rev. Messrs. James and Grove, to whom the dissenters of that day, in the West of England especially, were indebted for many of their most eminent and distinguished ministers, he was invited, in 1722, to settle with a congregation at Moreton-Hampstead, in the county of Devon. In early life his habit appeared consumptive, and his friends anticipated that his mortal course would be but of short duration: but by a strict attention to diet and exercise, and the uniform regularity of his life, he so far strengthened his constitution as to be preserved in the enjoyment of health, and the means of usefulness, to a very advanced age.

At this period, the controversy of which we have already given some account in the memoir of Mr. Peirce was but just brought to a close; and its unhappy effects in diffusing animosity and personal jealousy among many, who till then had not thought their differences on speculative points inconsistent with the maintenance of Christian brotherhood, were but too manifest; while the advantages which undoubtedly arose from it indirectly, in promoting a spirit of inquiry, and more just and rational views of religious liberty, were not as yet so fully developed. The liberal principles, however, which appear to have guided his excellent instructors, and which may be fairly inferred not only from their writings and general reputation, but from the subsequent character and conduct of many of their most distinguished pupils, led Mr. Towgood, from the first, to avoid the patrons of intolerant impositions; and though educated in what is called the orthodox faith, he held himself at liberty to examine and judge for himself; fully persuaded, at the same time, that a doctrine which was the subject of so much controversy, involving so much intricate and perplexed discussion, and on which so many wise and excellent men were arranged on both sides, was, at all events, not essential to salvation.

In this secluded situation he remained for about fifteen years, passed in the exemplary discharge of the pastoral duties; his uniform and even course unmarked by any memorable event, except his marriage to the daughter of James Hawker, Esq., of Luppit, in the county of Devon. By this lady he had four children, one of whom only

survived him. In 1737 he removed to Crediton, where he pursued the same useful plans for the improvement of his hearers which he had adopted in his original settlement—being “instant in season and out of season, exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine.”

In this year Mr. Towgood made his first appearance as an author in support of that cause of religious liberty of which he became afterwards so able and effective an advocate, by the publication of a small pamphlet entitled “High-flown Episcopal and Priestly Pretensions examined, in a Dialogue between a Country Gentleman and a Country Vicar;” containing a judicious defence of the common rights of Christians and the sufficiency and excellence of the Scriptures.

In 1741 he appeared before the public in a cause which to us, at this distance of time, and removed from the influence of party and temporary excitement, appears much more dubious. The occasions are but rare when the Christian minister can descend with grace and propriety into the arena of political contention; and still more so when the preacher of the gospel of peace can with consistency come forward as the advocate of war, labouring to blow up the coals of national animosity and vengeance, when his countrymen would otherwise be inclined to withdraw from the conflict. Yet such appears to be the character and intention of a pamphlet which our author published at this time, under the title “Spanish Cruelty and Injustice a justifiable Plea for a vigorous War with Spain, and a rational ground for hope of success.” We believe it is now well understood that the tales of cruel outrages said to be

perpetrated by the Spaniards on our traders in the West Indies, which were widely circulated at that period, and which wrought the nation up to such a pitch of frenzy as to drive the pacific administration of Sir Robert Walpole most reluctantly into a war, were grossly and wilfully exaggerated for party purposes; and also that the trade which it was sought to protect at such an expense was not only altogether contraband, but utterly insignificant in its value. But if the case had been different, it seems to us that the minister of religion had better leave to others the business of preaching up war, remembering who it was that said, "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

Shortly after this we find him coming forward, with great activity and success, on an occasion much more congenial with his character and office. In the year 1743 a dreadful fire at Crediton deprived no fewer than four hundred and fifty families of their homes. This awful event awakened all the benevolent sympathies of Mr. Towgood, who exerted himself to the utmost to lessen the affliction. His house and his purse were alike open for the relief of the sufferers. It was one of those occasions on which mankind were made to agree; and he accordingly co-operated zealously with Mr. Stacey, the clergyman of the parish, in the various measures which they undertook for soliciting subscriptions, and procuring other relief from a distance. A sermon, which he preached on the Sunday after this terrible visitation, was published, and was of great service in attracting the attention and sympathy of the public in ge-

neral to the deplorable state of his suffering neighbours.

About this time he published a valuable tract on the sentiments suitable to a season of recovery from sickness. It was designed as a present to such of his congregation as had lately been raised from dangerous disorders, and contained serious reflections, resolutions, and devout meditations, suitable to persons in these circumstances. It passed through three editions in this country, besides a large impression in America, under the direction of the author's friend and correspondent, Dr. Mayhew, of Boston, in New England.

In 1745, the year of the rebellion, our author again came forward in the character of a political divine; more excusably than before, because at that period it was scarcely possible not to connect the threatened restoration of the Stuart dynasty with the prevalence and, perhaps, even the re-establishment of Popery; notwithstanding the remarkable fact, that the great bulk of the Catholics of these kingdoms stood aloof from the conflict, while the most determined adherents (in theory at least) of the exiled family were a still numerous class of the clergy of the church of England. Nevertheless there was good reason to conclude, that whatever tended to impress the people at large with a dislike and jealousy of Popery would lead them to make more vigorous efforts to prevent the return to the throne of a family now devotedly attached to that system. With this object, accordingly, Mr. Towgood preached and published a sermon, containing "a summary of the errors, absurdities, and iniquities of Popery—

shewing its worship to be idolatrous, its doctrine corrupt, and its moral conduct entirely repugnant to the precepts of our Divine Master." About the same time he republished, with a similar view, the statements of Bishops Burnet and Lloyd, tending to prove that "the Pretender" was not really the son of James II. There are few, we believe, who are not now perfectly convinced that these statements were utterly groundless; and it is somewhat mortifying to think, that at this or at any period the great interests of civil and religious liberty could not be safely trusted to their own merits, but required to be bolstered up by giving renewed currency to a gross delusion.

In the same year appeared Mr. White's* Letters to a Gentleman dissenting from the Church of England, which gave rise to Mr. Towgood's most important and memorable publication, which has for ever given his name an honourable connexion with the great cause of religious liberty—of free and unbiassed inquiry after religious truth. The reply to Mr. White, entitled "The Dissenting Gentleman's Letters," contains as complete and satisfactory a view as is any where to be met with, of the principles on which a separation from the Church of England may be fully justified on the part of those who conscientiously dissent from its doctrines, object to its constitution and discipline, and, above all, disapprove of its connexion

* Mr. White was a clergyman of the Church of England, who chiefly made himself known by this and some other publications in the controversy between the church and the dissenters. He also published an answer to the "Free and Candid Disquisitions," and a tract entitled "The Protestant Englishman guarded against the Arts and Arguments of Roman Papists and Emissaries."

with and dependance on the state. The controversial character of this work, which doubtless added materially to its popularity and extensive circulation, and, consequently, to its effect in the first instance, may perhaps, in some slight degree, diminish its interest at present; when the publication to which it is an answer has long ceased to attract any notice, and would, in fact, have been altogether forgotten, but for the refutation in which its title and some of its most remarkable passages are embodied. It is, however, an excellent model of the controversial style, and well deserves to be studied in this point of view by every one who finds it necessary to engage in a personal contest of this kind, and is desirous, at the same time, that he does full justice to his cause and his argument, never to forget that he has also to sustain the characters of a scholar, a gentleman, and a christian. The author is very successful in taking advantage of his opponent's mistakes and oversights, and yet does it not in such a manner as to lead to the suspicion that he is contending for victory rather than for truth,—that he is enabled by superior acuteness and dexterity to make the worse appear the better cause,—or that he owes his success not to the intrinsic force of his reasoning, but to the weakness and mismanagement of his assailant. There is just enough of playful good-natured satire bestowed on the weak points of his adversary's case to give the work a sufficiency of that seasoning, without which a dry discussion of questions of this nature would, perhaps, scarcely be read; and yet in no instance does he condescend to such reflections as appear to be intended merely to give pain to any one,

however opposed in sentiment or profession. Though it must be confessed that his style rises occasionally to the tone of well-merited indignation when he is forced to expose and comment in the only suitable terms on some remarkable examples of gross, and it is difficult not to say wilful, misrepresentation, still he never forgets the obvious and important rule, which so few public disputants have attended to as carefully as could be wished, to confine himself to the argument, and never to indulge in personal reflections, in order to blacken or depreciate the character of his opponent.

Passing over without notice the invidious remarks with which Mr. White had filled his first letter on the lives of dissenters as compared with those of churchmen, which he justly regards as having nothing to do with the question, our author at once lays the foundation of his case in the unwarrantable pretension of the Church of England to decree rites and ceremonies, and to exercise authority in matters of faith; at the same time that she disclaims that infallibility which could alone render such a pretension plausible or consistent. He maintains that the whole controversy may properly be considered as turning upon this single point; and shews that the assertion of such a claim involves a complete desertion of the only ground on which a separation from the Church of Rome can be successfully vindicated. Accordingly, he shews that, whenever the partizan of the English church is called on to argue this matter with the Romanist, he finds it necessary immediately to desert his favourite ground of authority, and assume the position and

weapons of the dissenter. *Then* the talk is of free inquiry and the right of private judgment; then the words of Chillingworth are quoted, "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants;" a principle which, as our author justly observes, if followed out consistently to its practical results, would have driven Chillingworth himself, and Hales, and Middleton, and many others who have resorted to it, to take up their lot with the dissenters. The consequence is, that, as a controversialist, the churchman is continually placing himself in what may be called a "false position," between two fires: the Papist reminds him of the high and lordly tone with which he asserts church-authority in his argument with the Dissenter, who, in his turn, points out to him the inevitable conclusion from the true Protestant principle which he himself advances in his dispute with the Papist.

But the great difficulty in which the assertion of this claim on the part of the Church of England involves its supporters, is the question, Who constitute the church? in whom is this authority vested? A church is well defined in one of the Articles, "a congregation of faithful men, assembled for the worship of God, and professing faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" but it is evidently not in this sense that the term is here to be understood, for the bulk of the congregation have never been even consulted on the matter. Neither does the clergyman, or even the whole body of clergy throughout the land, with the bishops and archbishops at their head, constitute the church in the sense here inquired after. The authority is vested in the king and parliament, or rather in the

king, or the queen, as the case may be, without even the concurrence of the parliament. There is nothing, for example, in *the constitution of the church itself*, to prevent Queen Victoria, the sovereign of these realms at nineteen, from issuing a commission, if so disposed, not only without the consent of the clergy, but in opposition to their unanimous protest against it, to change the entire ecclesiastical establishment of this country. It was the crown alone which originally established the present order of things, without asking for the concurrent authority, nay, in spite of the determined resistance, of the great body of the clergy; and whenever any alteration shall be thought desirable, the crown alone will be empowered to decide what it shall be, or in what way it shall be accomplished. The church of England is a *parliamentary* church, of which the sovereign is constituted the supreme head; and can alone decide, in the last resort, in matters spiritual or ecclesiastical. Without his or her sanction, the decisions of its highest dignitaries are altogether null and void. Who can wonder that the apparent absurdity of such a constitution should give the Catholic a prodigious advantage in his controversy with the churchman?

This work soon acquired a very extensive circulation, which it still continues to enjoy, and was the means of introducing its author to the acquaintance of persons of great literary eminence, both in this country and America. Many letters of thanks were sent him for the service he had done to the cause of religious liberty; particularly by Dr. Chauncy, of Boston, in New England, who became his frequent correspondent, and under

whose direction three editions were printed in that country. In the century, or nearly so, which has now elapsed, since its first publication, the relative position of the parties has been somewhat altered, particularly of late years, by the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. But the constitution of the establishment, its system of doctrines and discipline, its forms of worship, and its anti-christian pretensions to authority in matters of faith, remain the same; and there is reason to apprehend that the prevalent spirit of its leaders is by no means changed for the better. At all events, the "Dissenting Gentleman's Letters" still continue, and, as far as we can judge, will long continue, a standard book in the controversy between the church and those who inherit the position and principles of the original Nonconformists. In some respects, it may, perhaps, be found that, by the experience since acquired, we have learnt to carry out its principles to a greater extent, and to remove some inconsistencies from their practical application. But if so, it will not be the only instance on record, in which acute and ingenious men have ably advocated doctrines in advance of their age, and of which they were not themselves prepared to see and acknowledge all the results.

In 1748 Mr. Towgood again appeared as a political writer, with an "Essay towards obtaining a true Idea of the Character and Reign of Charles I." This volume consists chiefly of a series of arranged extracts from the principal original historians of that period; selecting, frequently in preference, those who, from party bias or personal connexions, might be supposed, or were universally understood, to be prejudiced in favour of the royal

cause. The evidence seems to be stated on both sides with fairness and impartiality ; though certainly it is difficult for any statement of the oppressive tyranny, the despotic spirit, the utter absence of all regard to principle, consistency, or sincerity, which marked the first fifteen years of this unhappy reign, to go beyond that which is here quoted from the most friendly witnesses. The work is drawn up with ability, and shews, what might be expected in a writer who took so warm an interest in discussions of this nature, an intimate acquaintance with the sources of original information relating to this period of English history. It is observable, however, that the author appears to have two objects in view, which are barely consistent with each other ;—the one, to shew that King Charles was in no way entitled to be venerated as a martyr, or worshiped as a saint ; the other, to vindicate the Presbyterians from the charge of having had any hand in his “murder.” To make out the first point, he presents a picture, unimpeachable either in its outlines or its darkest shades, of misgovernment in every possible form of tyranny, extortion, oppression, gross partiality, religious persecution, and an utter disregard of all principle and integrity, which seemed from the first to lead only to one conclusion, and to render the final catastrophe all but inevitable. Certainly, if the crown implies a trust reposed in him who wears it, if it not merely confers rights, but imposes duties, and if there can be such a thing as treason on the part of a monarch towards the people subjected to his rule, then had Charles rendered himself liable to its penalties ; and unless there is one rule of equity

and justice applicable to crowned heads and another to the rest of mankind, the only considerations which could have saved him from his merited fate were simply those of a prudential nature. It might well have been made a question by those who had no doubt in their own minds of Charles's guilt in a moral point of view, whether, in the then state of parties and of popular prejudices in behalf of royalty, the interests of the nation would not be seriously endangered by pushing matters to this extremity. On the other hand, it is not easy to see what alternative was left after what had passed, consistently with a proper regard to the general security of the people at large, and still more so of those who had been actively engaged on the popular side; knowing as they did from repeated experience, that no reliance was to be placed on the king's professions, or even on his most solemn engagements; which his whole conduct shewed that he was determined to observe only so long, and in such cases, as it appeared to be necessary or suitable to his own convenience.

But, whatever may be the merit or demerit of the proceedings which finally brought Charles to the block, Mr. Towgood shews plainly enough, that the Presbyterians are not more entitled to claim the one than they are liable to the other. A large majority of both houses of parliament were in the first instance friendly to the established church; and, afterwards, the extreme measures which ended in the death of the king were urged forward by the independent party and the army, notwithstanding the most strenuous opposition of the Presbyterians both in and out of parliament. In

fact, the only public body which had the courage at the last to protest against the trial and execution of the king, was the assembly of Presbyterian ministers in and about London, whose conduct on this occasion, whatever we may think of its wisdom, certainly did great credit to their manly spirit and intrepidity. For this and other reasons, their party, far from promoting the new order of things which was now sought to be introduced, did all they could to thwart it; insomuch that to them is in a great measure to be ascribed the final failure of this bold attempt at political renovation. If this powerful body, instead of throwing their whole weight into the opposite scale, had given their cordial support to the able and enlightened statesmen who were then placed at the head of affairs, who shall say that they might not have succeeded in placing on a permanent basis the Commonwealth of England? It was to the same party that the nation was afterwards mainly indebted for the unconditional restoration of Charles II.; a step which that unprincipled monarch soon gave them abundant cause to repent of. So that whatever their other delinquencies may have been, nothing can be further from the truth than to lay the king's death to the charge of the Presbyterians, or to impute to them, as a party, a tendency to republicanism.*

* A new edition of this work, which appeared in 1780, but without the author's concurrence or knowledge, was the subject of a somewhat severe critique in the *Monthly Review*, particularly on account of the insinuation founded on the statement of Oldmixon in the preface to his *History of the House of Stuart*, that Clarendon's original work had been altered and garbled by his editors, and gross interpolations introduced, so as to make it speak more favourably for the royal cause than its author in-

In 1749, Mr. Towgood was invited to become co-pastor with Mr. Lavington, Mr. Walrond, and his cousin Mr. Stephen Towgood, to the two united congregations of dissenters at James's Meeting and Bow Meeting, Exeter. The two former of his destined colleagues were the same who had taken such an active part against Mr. Peirce and Mr. Hallet thirty years before; but the very invitation of Mr. Micaiah Towgood was in itself a proof that the spirit of the times, by a gradual and imperceptible progress, rather than by any sudden or violent transition, was considerably changed. For though he had not come forward as a controversial writer on doctrinal points, yet it was well known that he had long ago abandoned the distinguishing tenets of the Calvinistic and Trinitarian theology. His views on these subjects appear to have coincided for the most part with those of Mr. Peirce and the leading Arians of the early part of the last century; or, perhaps, in some particulars he deviated further than they did from the standard of what is called orthodoxy. There can, however, be no doubt that at this period a large proportion of the con-

tended. For many years it was supposed that this charge had been proved to be entirely groundless, and it was admitted to be so by Mr. Towgood himself; but notwithstanding the apparent respectability of the evidence on which this reputation was founded, the appearance in 1825 of a correct edition, printed under the auspices of the University of Oxford, from the original MS. deposited in the Bodleian Library, shews that it was substantially well founded, though the blame had not been laid to the charge of the real offenders. The variations prove to be even more numerous than had been imagined, and some of them are of considerable importance; tending for the most part to soften the evidence afforded by various passages against the royalists, and to blacken the character of several of the parliamentary leaders.

gregation with which he was about to be connected retained the religious principles of their forefathers; and therefore, in complying with their invitation, Mr. Towgood entered on a station of great delicacy and difficulty. It is always a nice line for a minister to draw in such cases between the contending claims of sincerity and benevolence; to study at the same time the things which make for peace, and those which he conscientiously believes to be most conducive to the edification of his hearers. "He never gave up (says his biographer, Mr. Manning) what he thought an essential article of faith in order to please men; but by his justly acquired reputation as a writer, by diligent and affectionate assiduity in the various branches of the pastoral office, by the force of Christian meekness, condescension, and a readiness to do them all kinds of good offices, he conciliated their affection and esteem, and constrained them to forego their objections. He considered and accommodated himself to the different tempers, prejudices, and infirmities of mankind, as far as a good conscience would allow, and imagined himself fully justified in this conduct by the behaviour of our blessed Lord and his Apostles, and the prudential and pacific maxims of the New Testament." At this time it is probable that the bulk of the congregation were more orthodox than their minister. In the course of thirty years, by Mr. Manning's account, it would seem that a new generation had risen up, with whom it was nearly the reverse.*

* A decisive proof of this change is the fact that; on the announcement of Mr. Towgood's intended resignation, the congregation invited Dr. Priestley to be his successor; a circumstance to which Dr. P. alludes in a letter to Mr. Bretland, March 19, 1781.—See *Life of Priestley*, vol. i. 350.

The first change introduced by Mr. Towgood's influence appears to have been in the mode of admission to the Lord's supper; previous to which it had been customary to adopt a practice similar to that in use among the Independents, and to require a declaration of the candidate's faith and experience, more minute than, in his opinion, the Scriptures authorized: after this time, it was left to the ministers to ascertain by private conversation that the parties wishing to give this testimony of their faith in Christ were influenced in so doing by right dispositions and views. When they were satisfied on these points, they mentioned the name of the candidate one month previous to his admission. It is evident that this last condition would soon pass into a mere form, and might, perhaps, be as well dispensed with. Surely the desire of any individual to comply with the dying request of his Saviour, to observe this simple rite in remembrance of him, ought to be considered as in itself a *primâ facie* evidence that he does it from a proper motive, and ought to be received as such, unless there is some very good reason to the contrary; and it is not easy to understand what right any other parties have to throw difficulties in the way of his giving this proof of his discipleship, which are not opposed to his uniting in the other public institutions and services of religion. At all events, every kind of inquisitorial examination into the private opinions and doctrinal views of individual Christians is an unwarrantable attempt to judge another's servant. At Exeter, all such pretensions appear from this time to have been abandoned; a circumstance which in the last public act of his life, in resign-

ing the pastoral charge, Mr. Towgood mentions to their honour.

“While our brethren of the establishment, and many of our dissenting churches, fence round their sacramental tables with terms and conditions and forms and rites which Christ never prescribed, and reject us from his table, unless, besides what he enjoins, we submit also to some injunctions and requirements of their own, we think ourselves not treated with either the candour or the justice which our relation to them as fellow-servants, and to Christ as our common Lord, gives us a right to demand. We remonstrate, and complain that our Christian liberty is invaded; that a dangerous and undue power is usurped in the church; its catholicism destroyed, and an unhappy breach made in the communion of saints. Your churches, my brethren, to your honour be it mentioned, are founded on a more liberal, on the scriptural apostolic plan. You lay your communion open to every sincere Christian, to whatever denomination or party he belongs: whatever his peculiar notions or speculations may be as to doubtful and disputed matters, if you have reason to believe he is an honest and sincere, however mistaken man, you receive him, as you are commanded, ‘but not to doubtful disputations;’ and give him this pledge of your affection and esteem, that you will consider and behave towards him as a fellow-servant and Christian brother.”*

Another indication of a change in the spirit of the times which occurred about this period, has

* Grounds of Faith in Christ, p. 86.

already been mentioned elsewhere. In 1753, it being proposed in the Assembly to take into consideration the following question, "Whether the Assembly will recommend any candidates to ordination who refuse to declare their faith in the deity of the Son and the Holy Ghost," it was debated whether the said question should be put and decided by a majority in the negative. This determination is understood to have been mainly due to Mr. Towgood's influence. He and Mr. Stephen Towgood voted in the majority; his two other colleagues, of course, in the minority.

In 1756 a seasonable and spirited pamphlet appeared from our author's pen, under the title of "Serious and Free Thoughts on the present State of the Church and Religion;" occasioned by the Bishop of Oxford's charge to his clergy, wherein his lordship drew a melancholy picture of the times. "Hence," says Mr. Manning, "our author took occasion, with a becoming freedom, to point out some of the causes of the prevalence of scepticism, which seemed not to have been so thoroughly and so seriously adverted to as their importance deserved. The principal cause on which he insists is the general apprehension that the clergy are not themselves thoroughly persuaded of the truth and importance of the Christian religion; inasmuch as they solemnly subscribe to articles which they do not really believe, and declare their unfeigned assent and consent to forms in divine worship which they highly disapprove, perhaps heartily condemn."*

In 1758 he published a sermon preached at

* Manning's Sketch of the Life of Towgood, p. 62.

Exeter, on the Lord's day after receiving the account of the taking of Cape Breton. On this sermon, to which we may to a certain extent apply the remarks already made on our author's pamphlet in support of the Spanish war in 1741, there are some strictures in a judicious paper with the well-known signature N. L. T., in the *Monthly Repository*, ix. 548. The humour of making the church of Christ the scene of thanksgivings to the "God of Battles," and that not for protection from hostile invasion, or support in struggles against lawless oppression, for which some apology might be made, but for success in the pursuit of national aggrandizement and military *glory*, seems to have been common in those times with many of whom better things might have been expected.

In the year 1760, an academical institution was set on foot at Exeter for the education of young men destined for the Christian ministry, as well as for the other learned professions and the various departments of commercial and active life. It was placed under the care of respectable and learned tutors, particularly the excellent Mr. Merivale, the friend and correspondent of Lardner, who was at the head of the theological department, with the assistance of Mr. Towgood, who undertook to deliver a lecture once a week on the critical study of the Scriptures; a province in which he had scope for the exertion of all his abilities, and an opportunity of opening to his pupils his ample stores of scriptural knowledge. "Those gentlemen," says his biographer, "who had the happiness to attend his lectures, will re-

member with gratitude his affectionate and solicitous concern for their improvement and usefulness, and especially that they might be animated with the love of truth, and clearly comprehend the genuine principles of Christianity. To promote these important purposes, he permitted, encouraged, and assisted them to think freely and impartially on every subject of natural and revealed religion which the study of the Scriptures would necessarily bring under their consideration. He did not look upon it as his duty to keep up strictly at all times to the character of the didactic teacher. His lectures were rather the open informations of a friend, than the dictates of a master."* This important office Mr. Towgood continued to discharge till the year 1771, when the academy was discontinued in consequence of the lamented death of Mr. Merivale.

In 1772, at the request of an assembly of ministers in Northamptonshire, he published a judicious abridgment of his "Dissenting Gentleman's Letters," under the title of "A plain Answer to the Question, 'Why are you a Dissenter?'" In this pamphlet the general argument is brought into a small compass, and as well and distinctly stated as the limits would allow. But the abridgment is carried further than was necessary, and the argument stript too bare of the details and illustrations which imparted an interest to the original work. Perhaps an acceptable service would be rendered by any one who would remodel the work on a larger scale, striking out

* Manning, 64.

only what has a merely temporary and personal reference, and adapting the whole to the circumstances of the present times.

In 1777 he lost his colleague and relative, Mr. Stephen Towgood, who was succeeded by Mr. James Manning. Though now so far advanced in life, he continued to take his share in the duties of the public congregation, till the infirmities of age disabled him from the more laborious part of his ministerial functions. He finally resigned the pastoral office in 1782, after more than sixty years of service in the Christian church. On this occasion, in addition to a substantial testimony of their respect and affection, the united congregations addressed to him a request that he would publish some of his discourses. This request he declined; but, to gratify in some measure the wishes of his friends, he published a very interesting and impressive address to them "On the Grounds of Faith in Jesus Christ." He first gives a concise but judicious statement of the evidence of the Christian system, as derived from prophecy and miracles, from the gifts of the Spirit imparted to the apostles, from the success of their preaching and the stability of the Christian church, and from the present state of God's ancient people, so conformable to the predictions both of our Scriptures and their own. He then contemplates the glorious superstructure erected on this foundation; under which head he gives his own most matured and final views of the leading points of Christian doctrine, regarding God as in himself and essentially the compassionate Father of mankind, in whom dwells every conceivable perfection; who sent his only begot-

ten Son, the first-born of every creature, to enter into a solemn covenant with all sincere and humble penitents. "This most gracious covenant God, in infinite mercy, hath been pleased to ratify and confirm by the death, the resurrection, and the assumption into glory of *Jesus*, the mediator, his only begotten Son, who not only came from heaven to publish it to mankind, but died to attest the truth, and to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. As a reward of this his voluntary obedience unto death, he is exalted to supreme power over all created beings, both in heaven and earth; and is thus vested with full authority to carry all its kind designs into full execution. But these sufferings of the Mediator we are always to consider not as the primary and moving cause of God's being propitious to us, and willing to be reconciled, but as the manner only, or medium, in which he was pleased to shew himself propitious. Antecedent to the death of Christ, he was gracious and merciful and ready to forgive. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. But for infinitely wise reasons, fully known to himself, but some of which we clearly see, he chose to dispense his pardons only by the hands, and as a reward of the meritorious sufferings, of one of the human race; that, as by man came death, so by man should also come the resurrection of the dead."*

From this extract, and the general strain of this discourse, it will appear that his views of the atonement differed only by a slight shade from those which most Unitarians would readily assent

* Grounds of Faith, &c., p. 30.

to. As for the doctrine of original sin, it is scarcely necessary to say, that he utterly rejected it, as absurd in itself, degrading to the human nature, and injurious to the divine. He believed in the personality of the Holy Spirit; but represents him as a subordinate agent acting under the direction of Christ, by whom he is sent as the Comforter or Advocate, strengthening, inspiring, and directing his disciples in the great work which was given them to do. After a glowing and animated sketch of the blessings and privileges derived from the Gospel dispensation, he affectionately exhorts to a diligent use of all the means of grace, and especially the commemorative service of the Supper; his views of the nature and design of which he states more at large, and concludes the whole with a short but earnest and impressive appeal, which cannot be read without emotion, and must have gone to the hearts of those who for so many years had profited by his labours and instructions.

This little work, the parting gift of an aged pastor to his flock, is a production of no ordinary merit and value. When we consider his advanced age, and the circumstances under which it was written, it must leave on the reader a most favourable impression of the mind and heart,—of the talent, the amiable dispositions, and pious sentiments of the author; and its very excellence increases our regret that it should be almost the only specimen which is left to us of the practical and devotional compositions of this highly gifted man. The publications by which he is chiefly known to the world, though many of them highly valuable and excellent in themselves, yet, from

their argumentative and even controversial character, do not give a complete or adequate picture of his mind, nor do they present that view of it which is both most interesting in itself and likely to be most edifying and instructive.

After the period of his retirement from public duty, Mr. Towgood lived nine years in an honoured and happy old age; cheered by the consciousness of a long life well-spent in the service of God and of Christ, and in doing good to mankind, and by assured hopes and animating prospects of the future. The infirmities of so protracted an age did not press so heavily upon him as to prevent him from taking an undiminished interest in the society of his friends, in the course of public events, and especially in the progress of religious truth, and the earnest though sometimes too vehement discussions which were sure ultimately to promote it.

“But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.”

On the 20th of February 1791, he had a paralytic seizure, from which, however, he in some measure recovered, so as to retain the full exercise of his mental faculties, though with a gradually increasing bodily weakness; which he bore with a uniform placid cheerfulness, by which, as he had taught his friends in the active scenes of life how to live, he now taught them how to die. At length, on the 1st of February 1792, in his ninety-second year, he peacefully expired, leaving no good man his enemy, and attended to his grave by the affectionate recollection of all who had derived pleasure and benefit from contemplating in him eminent talents rightly employed in

the most excellent and honourable service, and a lengthened pilgrimage, visibly leading to eternal rest.

Mr. Towgood's only son, *Matthew Towgood, Esq.*, died a few months before his father, in the 60th year of his age. This gentleman was originally bred to his father's profession; and was for seven years minister at Bridgwater. He then quitted the ministry to enter into trade, and subsequently became an eminent banker in London. "He was a gentleman," says Mr. Manning, "of distinguished public spirit and ardour of mind, and zealously engaged in various undertakings in which the advantage and honour of the Protestant Dissenters were concerned." The honoured name continues to be worthily sustained by his descendants.

The life of Mr. T., by his colleague and successor Mr. Manning, from which the materials of the preceding memoir have been chiefly derived, is an interesting piece of biography, worthy of the author and of the subject.

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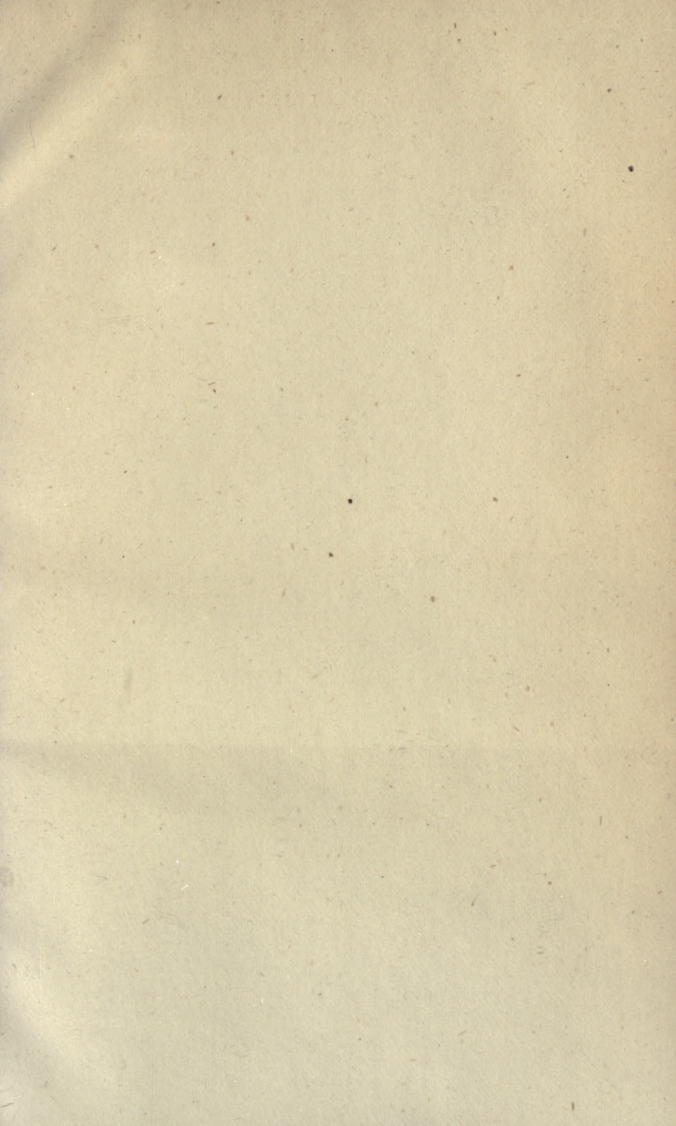
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